

**USAGE AND MEANING OF EARLY MEDIEVAL
TEXTILES. A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF VESTIMENTARY
SYSTEMS IN FRANCIA AND ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND**

by

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Abstract

This thesis puts under examination the linguistic and non-verbal elements of early medieval clothing on the basis of semiotic systems that pertain to the use and function of early medieval textiles in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England. An attempt is made here to address the possibilities in the research of the diverse messaging systems which reflect social roles and identities communicated visually through dress and dress accessories. In the course of this examination the relationship of early medieval people with dress and their concepts about their bodies is explored. While seeking to establish the most important elements in the structure of early medieval dress, we will also try to explore and deploy the methodologies of corporeal semantics, the criteria of visibility of the vestimentary display and the elements that make up the key focus of the apparel.

The empirical evidence is drawn from both Merovingian and Carolingian Frankish and Anglo-Saxon contexts and comprises both texts of diverse genres which set the framework of a historical narrative for the subject in the light of comparative historical analysis. This framework is set against, is compared and challenged by the archaeology from early medieval burial sites and relics.

My aims are, first the establishment of a common semiotic plane of interaction and comparison between two types of source material, the historical sources and the archaeology. In order to accomplish this, the disparities between the quality and quantity of textual and artefactual evidence and their inherent limitations are also researched and evaluated. My second aim is to find out ways to extract information about textile and metalwork artefacts from the written sources and organise it so that it will be possible to visualise and understand the structure and the role of dress in early medieval societies in reference to the construction of social and personal identities.

This is an interdisciplinary task and the interpretative tools suggested here and the theory of verbal and non-verbal meaning of textiles could also be used as suggestions for further research directions of other types of linguistic and artefactual expression. Moreover, this task - to the point that the above issues and aims are resolved - could form the premise upon which a new system of artefact evaluation of the finds pertaining to dress from early medieval burials, a key feature of early medieval archaeology, could be exploited.

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I would like to add here a brief note on the translation of passages of the documentary sources in this work. I have used the most widely acknowledged and broadly used translations of early medieval Latin texts and cited them in the reference notes. Nevertheless, at times for reasons inherent in the nature of this study I had to focus on the interpretation, re-interpretation or on a choice of more descriptive terms

related to artefacts and their function. In this case, although I agree with the linguistic treatment of the rest of the text, I had to adapt it, especially when the artefact or the particular situation did not appear in the translation; in case there is fault with it, it is nobody else's but my own. In a few cases, where no translation was available, I ventured to translate texts and poems. I declare here that I own the responsibility for any mistranslation of text in its entirety as also in the case of a partial adaptation.

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Abbreviations

a.	annus, anno
AASS	<i>Acta Sanctorum (opera Bollandistarum)</i>
ASOB	<i>Acta Sanctorum Ordinis Sancti Benedicti</i>
ap.	apud
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca hagiographica latina</i>
ca.,c.	circa
capit.	capitular(e), capitul(um)
Cat.	Catalogue
CATHMA	Céramique de l' Antiquité tardive et du haut Moyen Âge
cm	centimetres
CD	<i>Codex Diplomaticus, Codice Diplomatico</i>
<i>Codex Theod.</i>	<i>Codex Theodosianus (trans, Pharr)</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i>
CDI	<i>Collection des documents inédits sur l' histoire de France</i>
cf	confer
CHF	<i>Les classiques de l' histoire de France au moyen âge</i>
Chron.	Chronicon, Chronica, Chronique
col., coll.,c.	columna
Coll.	<i>Collectio, Collection</i>
Conc.	<i>Concilium, Consilia</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
ChLA	<i>Chartes Latinae Antiquiores</i>
CIETA	<i>Bulletin de Liaison du Centre International d' Études des Textiles Anciens</i>
Dipl.	<i>Diploma, Diplomata</i>
Decr.	<i>Decretum</i>
dioec.	Dioecesis
dir.	director, directeur
e.g.	exempli gratia
ed.	edidit, ediderunt
eds.	editors
epics.	Episcopus
Epp.	<i>Epistol (ae), Epistola</i>
esp.	especially
fol.	folio
gr.	grams
HF	Gregory of Tours, <i>Decem libri Historiarum</i> , Krusch B., Levison W., (eds.), (<i>MGH, Scr rer Merov</i> I.1, (Hannover, 1951)
i.e.	id est
Isid. Etym.	Isidorus Hispalensis, <i>Etymologiarum sive originum Libri XX</i> , (annotated edition Lindsay W.M.), vols. II, Oxford Classical Texts
Lat.	Latinus, Latinum

lib.	liber
m	meters
max.	maximum
mm	milimeters
<i>Merov.</i>	<i>Merovingicus, Merovingica</i>
<i>(MGH) SSRG</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum</i>
<i>(MGH) Scr rer Merov</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
<i>(MGH) Poet Antiquiss</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Poetae Antiquissimi</i>
<i>(MGH) Epp.</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Epistulae</i>
Ms, Mss	manuscript (s)
N.S.,n.s.	Nova Series
n°	numero
ÖAW	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften
ODB	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium ed. Kazdan et alii.</i>
op.cit.	opus citum
p., pp.	pagina, paginae
PG	<i>Patrologia cursus completus series Graeca (ed.), Migne, 161 vols</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia cursus completus series Latina (ed.), Migne 221 vols</i>
pontif.	pontificalis
post	posterior, posteriore
Ps.	Pseudo
q.v.	quod vide
r°	recto
<i>Reg.</i>	<i>Regula, Registrum</i>
s.	seculum, sanctus
SC	Sources chrétiennes
Sép.	Sépulture
s.v.	sub voce
saec.	saecul(um)
sec.	secolo, secoli
<i>Scr.</i>	<i>Scriptores</i>
<i>Scr rer Langob.</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec.VI-I (MGH)</i>
<i>Scr rer Merov</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum (MGH)</i>
<i>Ser.</i>	<i>Series</i>
<i>SRG</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum (MGH)</i> <i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum Nova Series (MGH)</i>
SS	<i>Scriptores (in folio) (MGH)</i>
St	Saint
Suppl.	Supplement
<i>Synod.</i>	<i>Synodus</i>
t.	tomus
<i>Tract.</i>	<i>Tractatus</i>

<i>Trad.</i>	<i>Traditiones</i>
tit.	titulus
trans.	translation, translated
v ^o	verso
vol. vols	volumen, volumina, volumes

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: A brief guide to a long textile project

This thesis will try to explore and discuss a basic aspect of the environment of the early medieval peoples who lived in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England from 500 until 900. This will be a discussion about textiles, materials that surrounded and were in constant and intimate contact with early medieval individuals at every stage of their lives and about the cultural aspects of these materials. People in the early medieval period, as much as we do today, as much as people always have since the invention of weaving, entered life and lived it out inside textile products. As a result of this, garments and textile artefacts, unconsciously, through everyday lived experience, form complex barriers between our individual and collective identities. Our vestimentary environments constitute complex cultural systems because they both partake of the natural world, of the ecofacts of a community, that is its natural resources and the modes of their exploitation, and also represent social forms and distributions of technical, economic and symbolic knowledge and practices which can be either simple or very intricate.

The undertaking of a textile project on the vestimentary systems of the early middle ages could then, at least in theory, make possible the investigation of all information about early medieval societies, even the most diverse and ambiguous, all the more because that would be drawn from all the above-mentioned associations between nature and human society. Nevertheless, these associations in reality are projected into standard material and social referents; our knowledge of textiles derives primarily and in profusion from the written sources, and in material form in the archaeology, even if that knowledge is limited: the activity of weaving and weavers is very scantily attested in the written source material, and indeed there is little archaeological evidence for weaving itself in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, although the corpus of material evidence is

growing. Written or material, however, it is the constructions of the early middle ages that constitute the source of our data.

The discourse about textiles nonetheless runs into trouble when it faces the elements that would theoretically facilitate and advantage its discussion. The wealth of information on vestimentary systems in the written sources, underpinning all then-known areas of nature and human knowledge, is so complex that it defies both classification and analysis; and the evidence from the archaeology is easy neither to investigate nor to compare with the textual record, for reasons that will be explained later on. Therefore, there is a lot of information, but it has been very difficult to categorize and analyse it on the basis of an interpretative approach that would attempt to explore systematically the dynamics between the two types of empirical evidence, the textual and the material record. When one begins the analysis and the basic categorisations of a heterogeneous array of singular things, there is always a crucial point at which one needs to impose a cognitive order upon different classes of information. There is a methodological problem involved in setting these separate categories of information side by side. This means, for example, that abstract issues such as the meaning of imaginary literary constructions of textile artefacts, e.g. in a saint's life of the 7th century, has to be juxtaposed with much more tangible things: for example, the surviving remnants of fibres from a Frankish burial site of the furnished burial period, or an extract from a donation charter that mentions a garment. Concerning the first of these, the data pertaining to the mentalities related to textiles, the necessity of a theory of meaning of textile artefacts is obvious, and I will try to set one out later, and confront the above problems (see pp. 56-73). But this is no less vital for the categories of data which have a closer relation to material reality - the textiles that actually exist and survived from the past, and were used by people who had a name (which we either know, for example the Frankish Queen Balthild,¹ or not) - and a life, a social identity and position; although here another kind of treatment of our source material is required, at least as a starting point, as we will see later on.

Most of all, we have, inevitably, to face a need for diachronic and geographical separations: textiles express in the most obvious way, in everyday life, the non-static, the fashionable element and the fluidity of our social environment; and this varies according

¹ See Chapter 2, pp. 114-120.

to time and place. This last can be embedded within the most conservative imperatives, for clothing choices may not change at all, or else they may express the personal choice of an individual at a given moment. It is not very often that researchers into the early middle ages have to admit that behind the nameless and dry organic remains, the vestiges of structures and artefacts, operated complex individuals whose choices, obstacles and personal limitations might be seen partially in these remains. It is not an obvious notion in contemporary research that the construction of the subjectivities of people in the middle ages could have been as confusing as our own. But this means that, nameless or not, as in the case of the people mentioned in private documents, our information is never enough to reconstruct their social reality. This enquiry into early medieval textiles, their meaning, their consumption and production patterns is based to a large extent on the non-verbal, the socially and linguistically fluid, the habitual; but yet this is an overwhelmingly present element that forms links between the thoughts, practises, words and things of the people of the past. Only a small portion of knowledge about all this change, this confusion, this complexity, can be regained in a convincing way from the biographies of the artefacts or the contextual and intertextual analysis of the source material. Nonetheless, this research is based on the premise of respect:² for all the complex, spontaneous, subconscious workings of individuals that will remain secret for ever.

I am going here to deal with the non-verbal elements on the basis of semiotic systems that pertain to the use, function of textiles, and the messages communicated visually through dress and dress accessories, about the relationship of early medieval people with dress, and their concepts about their bodies. The non-verbal information about the most important elements in dress, will be assessed here via the criteria of visibility of the vestimentary display, and the elements that make up the focus of the apparel; I will also try to contextualize them and try to find out the more likely parameters of their use in other parallel contexts, and, finally, try to find out if it is possible to have an interactive interpretation between the non-verbal information and the textual record. The challenge in this project, in other words, starts and ends with the limitations which someone who undertakes this sort of research has to impose on the data

² This respect can be expressed when we refrain to ask a question that seems impossible to answer; sometimes it is better to protect the integrity of a question that is beyond our scope and cognitive abilities.

related to any given micro-environment and any particular space of social interaction, as in the case of the juxtaposition on an equal basis of two different types of empirical evidence which utilise different idioms of expressing meaning and have different empirical biases.

This chapter serves both as an introduction to this textile project, in search of the meaning and the usage of textiles, and as a background for the first part of the next one where I will try to set out a theory of verbal and non-verbal meaning of textiles which could be used for other types of linguistic and artefactual expression as well, and will be the premise upon which the other chapters will be based. This means that these introductory chapters are methodological and not empirical. The aims are, first, the establishment of a common semiotic plane of interaction and comparison between two types of source material, the historical sources and the archaeology, that have been difficult to combine because of the disparities between the quality and quantity of the evidence and also because of their nature. The second aim is to find out ways to extract information about textile artefacts from the written sources and organise it so that it can be used in a comparative analysis with the archaeology. My approach will be presented here, although every chapter in this thesis has its own methodological framework set out at the beginning of each chapter.

In this first introductory chapter there are also sections that deal with the historiography of the archaeology and the texts, the limitations of the source material and the key issues of this thesis. This introduction and the first part of the second chapter are structured through sections that deal with a theory of meaning, as mentioned above, differences between the written and the non-verbal sources of information, change and shifts in meaning.

The socially relevant features of textiles which are materially based on the operation of the first human machine and calculator, the loom, and the ways clothing was interpreted and found its meaning in the different societies of the early middle ages, will be negotiated here, as the prerequisite for any analysis and discussion. This means that the main links between the two types of sources will be the social distinctions of status, gender and age. In the next chapter there is a detailed presentation of my methodological framework and of my analytical tools, that is, how I will use the

vestimentary system of early medieval dress to organise my source material, after I show that all types of sources fit into culturally relevant semiotic systems. This will be followed by few paradigms of systems and an exemplification extracted from the sources. These will be presented in relation to what made this study meaningful for me: the questions I had, and the possibility of getting some convincing answers.

1.1 Socially relevant features of textile production in early medieval written sources

Textile products are prominent in early medieval documentary material. Garments and woven accessories are mentioned more often than any other kind of artefact, surpassing in frequency even metalwork in the sources. These references are encountered either as isolated citations in the texts of the early middle ages, or else as parts of a more complete garment system.³ In many occasions in the written sources of most genres, clothes - and textiles in general - stand out as much as do arms and armour, dress accessories and jewellery, and are represented in much more graphic terms than any other everyday human-made commodity, such as pottery, artefacts made of bone, or glass.

Textiles can be mentioned briefly but not in great detail by any author. Alternatively but more rarely, they may be the main focus of a narrative, as for instance in the 7th century description of the *pallium* of St Columbanus.⁴

They were asking for protection, praying in tears, in the terrifying danger, wherever they were urged from fear, were touching the *mantle* which he wore, some of them on their knees, so that he would forgive their ignominious sin...

The description of the textile artefact here is very straightforward, probably because it is the main medium of the miracle that is about to happen. Columbanus' mantle nonetheless stands in isolation and there is no way we can contextualise

³ See pp. 56-61, Chapter 2, 2.1 Organising representations of textiles: Syntagms and Systems.

⁴ *Vita Columbani abbatis discipulorumque eius*, Liber 1, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 4, p. 91,15, "Illi gemino vallati periculo, undique urguendi formitudinae, palleum quo indutur erat adtingunt, allii genibus provoluti, cum lacrimis precantur, ut pro tanti sceleris culpam illis ignosceret..."

information here about what it was made of, and what it looked like, other than it was probably ample and long. The only mantle that appears to have been preserved is from the late 7th century and belonged to a woman, Saint Balthild, who was a regent Queen, although it was found in a monastic context. The mantle there is silken, very long, covering the head, semicircular with fringes (see below, pp.114-115). It is hard to draw comparisons about garments that are separated by time lapse, and an established gender and status distinction, particularly as the person who wore the latter belonged to the high élite. Nevertheless, mantles were woven from one piece of cloth, for men and women; and if we compare the width of the Queen's mantle with what we know about the width of late Roman mantles, which were woven on a vertical loom, with a special width,⁵ the dimensions are the same (2,50-2,38 m). It is probable that Columbanus' mantle could have had the same dimensions, but the comparison cannot go beyond that point.

Textile artefacts can be assigned a secondary role in a text, and in this case too, the textile item is inscribed within a vestimentary system that it is often not mentioned in its entirety, but can be hinted at by the use of its most characteristic part, as in the case of the belt of St Gerald of Aurillac.⁶

Odo of Cluny, in this extract, used three different words that all mean "belt", "strap", or "baldric" here, *reminiculum*, *balteum*, *cinctorium*, so we have the full description of the most important vestimentary signifier of an aristocratic man, of the early 10th century, having horses to ride, a sword to gird, a decorative baldric, also all of which could be of gold, should he wish it. Although it is stressed in the text that he was

⁵ See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures, "Types of Looms.", see fig 2.8a.

⁶ The very worn and old "balteum"/sword-belt mentioned in Odo of Cluny, Life of Saint Gerald of Aurillac: "*Reminiculum illud quo solet ensis renibus astringi, per viginti annos, si tandiu durare posset, non mutare aut renovare curabat... Qui dicam de balteo vel ambitiosis cinctoriis aut fibula, de equorum phaleris, quandoquidem ille non solum portare aurum, sed nec habere quidem pateretur?*" ...and he would not change or renew his sword-belt for twenty years if it would last so long. What shall I say of the belts, the twisted cinctures, the buckles, the decorated medallions for horses, when he not only forbade himself to wear gold, but even to possess it?... De Vita S. Geraldii Comiti Aureliacensis, Odonis Abbatis Clunaciensis, PL 132, p. 656, c. 16, Translation by Sitwell G., (ed. and trans.), *The Life of St. Odo by John of Salerno and the Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac by St. Odo*, (London, 1958), pp. 110-111.

The baldric and belt is perceived here as the primary symbol of the military status of the hero and represents a single identity. This belt can be discussed separately; it can still be the most characteristic representative of a non-described but present clothing system of a 9th-10th century Frankish high-status warrior. The use of metonymy by Odo of Cluny - the most representative part for the whole - is one of his textual strategies, and it can give us the opportunity to discuss a vestimentary system even when a full list of the apparel is not available, like the particular type of tunic, the mail-shirt or a cuirass, a mantle, the hose and trousers too, if we compare the bits of information from other parallels.

against any display of his position, Gerald however, retains all the functional equipment, and therefore he is represented by Odo as actually not moving away from all the above roles at all. The arrangement of the words that describe his belting implies that that he is compromising his austerity to his secularity, expressed in all these types of belts with different functions. The latest in date for our period of study belt and baldric set we know from the archaeology, and is discussed below in Chapter 3, is the belt strap, the baldric, the reliquary belt strap end and the rectangular belt-fittings of an aristocratic warrior in Walda, Bavaria, in the middle of the 8th century.⁷ This is one of the latest early medieval furnished burials we know at present, and the features of the whole system of belting seems unique in style; all fittings, straps, strap distributors and buckles are elegant, narrow, small and there is only one delicately incised strap-end, which is a reliquary. The warrior had golden sheaths for his sword and his knife too, very unlike Gerald, although he carried on him saints' bones. Could it be possible that Gerald's belting would look like that? We will never know; in all probability, nevertheless, his tunic or mailshirt would have been worn and articulated in the same way as the Walda warrior's, so the visible effect from a distance would not be different, even if we are ignorant of the fashions of the 10th century.

The words here, whether they present the linguistic equivalents of real textile artefacts or just their verbal representations, assume certain cultural codes in the way the textile object is mentioned and described. These tend to reveal practices that are culturally specific to given social groups in a stratified society; the *pallium* of Columbanus is not any mantle, it is the abbots's, and it can work miracles as a medium of intercession; the specific type of belt of Gerald of Aurillac links him with his class, his comital duties and his military occupations: the reflection in both cases of the cultural system of the author can be revealed.⁸ Cases such as these, therefore, offer opportunities for further study of the social categories and the social roles that are signified by these codes, which both structure and are structured by textile objects.

⁷ Stein F., "Pre-Carolingian Graves in South Germany", *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Third Series 31 (1968), pp. 1-18 and Dannheimer H., "Ein spätmerowingischer Eulogenbehälter von Walda," *Germania* XLIV (1966), pp. 338-354, see fig 3.25 and Chapter 3, pp. 303-305.

⁸ *De Vita S. Geraldii Comiti Aureliacensis, Odo Abbatis Clunaciensis*, PL 132, p. 656, c.16.

Specific cultural codes are in fact inherent in both the remnants of the material record, that is the objects themselves as commodities and utilitarian artefacts, and are also - and perhaps even more so - inherent in the objects mentioned in texts. I argue also that in both cases of evidence, material and textual, they appear to function as projections of the social. An approach to the different function of each of these codes can in principle facilitate the understanding of both their interrelations and the systems they form. In the particular case of the discussion of textile artefacts from the written sources and the archaeology that follows, garment systems and systems of woven accessories will be the analytical tools, as I am going to discuss in the next section of this Chapter.

1.2 A vestimentary system: an attempt at the a unitary theory of meaning of textile artefacts in the historical and archaeological sources of the early middle ages.

To correspond to the real garment, or any other textile artefact which has a single material identity, there generally exists at least one description, or usually more, a linguistic equivalent of the described garment and other textile artefact. Both the real clothing and the written clothing are united in the actual dress, the conceptual construction they both refer to. These are equivalent, but they are nevertheless not identical; for there is a difference in substance and relations, and thus a difference of structure between them.⁹

We can go further: in practice we could also say that there is a third structure, different from these two, a cognitive one, which both forms a transition between these structures and serves as a model for both the material form of the textile and the written form. In this way we can address a number of possibilities pertaining to the social and the symbolic meaning of not only both material vestiges of clothing and their written equivalent, but also their place in a cultural value-system, possibilities which could be placed within a more general vestimentary system. We would still have to keep in mind,

⁹ See Barthes R. "Written Clothing", esp pp. 432-433, in Muckerji C., Schudson M.(eds.), *Rethinking Popular Culture. Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 432-451.

however, that the units of this system are located at the level of forms, those of written clothing at the level of words and those of the archaeological correlates at the level of material, economic, cultural values and technological systems. Here, we can further diversify the conceptual systems according to the nature of our source: there is one rhetorical system for each individual text or set of texts, as for example the sets of clothes described in a section of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*,¹⁰ and another garment system of meaning of every wearer of a set of clothes, such as the burial ensemble of the individual with the Arnegundis ring in Saint-Denis.¹¹

First I will illustrate in detail what I mean when I use the concept of a vestimentary or garment system. I will use this phrase in reference to its use as an organising device for the verbal, the technological and the imaginary. All three of these can be seen as structures or systems of meaning that use signs, semiologically, to systematise communication by means of a form of "speech". The verbal information would be for its most part empty verbal schemata if it was not filled by the non-verbal signs of the technological aspects, that is, the various products of the textile crafts in their most tangible form. These last, and their archaeological implications, which place the textile fragments or weaving implements into a particular time-slot and assign to them a specific geographical attribution, form a language of their own, full of meta-linguistic signs. This means that the artefact also has a meta-linguistic identity, as expressed in the ways the textile was worn, and the meaning these ways had for specific social groups, which could take on many nuances, usually lost to us for ever. An example of this is found in the description of the dress of Queen Radegund by Venantius Fortunatus, which turns out to very much resemble the dress of a bride, once we gain some idea of what both vestimentary systems, of Queens and brides, or at least their most characteristic signifiers, were.¹² In another example, from Jerome, we get an idea of how a woman of disputable morality expresses her profession, mostly by the way she is wearing her

¹⁰ Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive originum Libri XX*, (annotated edition Lindsay, W.M.), t. II, Oxford Classical Texts, Lib. XIX, *De Navibus, Aedificiis et Vestibus*.

¹¹ Fleury M., "Bijoux et parures mérovingiens de la reine Arégonde, belle-fille de Clovis, découverts à Saint-Denis," *Les dossiers de l'archéologie* no 32 (janv-fevr 1979), see infra vol II, fig 2.2.

¹² See Chapter 2, p. 74-75, note 43, Fortunatus Venantius, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, 1, 13, 265, p. 369.

clothes: she wears narrow sleeves, a garment without folds with a train, her tunic deliberately unstitched to show off the layers underneath, an embroidered girdle and shining black shoes that make a noise when she is walking.¹³ These are also the signs, though, of the courtesan, the tragedian actress and the dancer of the Hippodrome, according to John Chrysostom.¹⁴ In both cases, different layers of meaning are present in a subtext, and more than one social identity is signified for the same person in the same instance. A grammar of this meta-language of the early medieval textiles and clothing system has until now been the most difficult to grasp and even approach for contemporary research. But, it is, I think, the most obvious way to relate the technological and material aspects of textiles to the imaginaire, and to try to enter into the world of community-sanctioned perceptions. To complicate matters further, it is very possible, but understated in the subtext of our written sources, that different social, regional, ethnic and even gender groups, had a different understanding of elements of dress and ways to wear a garment and accessory, that could bring about at times conceptual and communicational misunderstandings between different cultural groups.¹⁵ There must have been a multiplicity of meta-linguistic, non-verbal codes of dress in the early middle ages, as also many ways these people conceived their own presence, actions and things and gave meaning into their world. All three planes of artefactual semiosis will nevertheless be discussed here and examined as verbal and non-verbal signs operating under the direction of culture. I am using this device, because I accept that there is a referential connection between language and material culture and the people who created both. The linguistic semiosis of dress, the discourse on vestimentary systems, is not disjoined from reality; the signifier and the signified are not just conventional or arbitrary; their operation shares a common syntax and meaning because, I think, they are cognitive constructions that operate on the same basis of signs even if the

¹³ Hieronymus Histriensis, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, Epp. 22, p. 13, and, also Epp. 117, p. 7.

¹⁴ John Chrysostom, *Epistula I ad Timotheon*, Migne, P., (ed.), PG 62, 8, 2, pp. 541-542, discussed by Delmaire R., "Le vêtement, symbole de richesse et de pouvoir, d'après les textes patristiques et hagiographiques du Bas- Empire", in Chausson F., Inglebert H., (eds.), *Costume et société dans l' Antiquité et le haut Moyen Age*, (Nanterre, 2003), pp. 97-98.

¹⁵ As will be explored in Chapter 3, section 3.9. Regional features of belts and associated fabrics and dress pp. 275-296, esp. pp. 293-296. The discussion of the conceptual misunderstandings on the basis of the diversity of dress and the reversals of social roles cannot be taken up in this thesis, as space would not permit it, but I will discuss it elsewhere shortly.

idioms are different and are expressed within the same cultural context. This shows more clearly when we approach the problem of where something retrieved in the material record fitted on the body. The concepts of the bodily focus, the understatement or overstatement of an accessory inside the entire hypothetical vestimentary system, the contextualisation and semiotic interpretation of the dressed or naked parts of a body, especially a gendered body, reconstructed from the archaeological remains, incorporates elements of language and meta-linguistic concepts. Corporeal semantics, I think, show that signs are transliterated in the same language in all three planes and that the same signifiers are not arbitrary but are based on an understanding of the world that is measured by human bodily experience and uses the body as a conceptual paradigm in language as well as in reality.

A syntax of the semiological system of dress encompasses all these aspects in their vertical and horizontal component parts: of synonyms of the same item that can be worn on the same part of a body and have the same function, like all the varieties of headwear worn by all ages, ethnicities and across a wide time span, and on the other hand the parts of an apparel, everything that can be worn at a time on an individual.¹⁶ In both cases of this organisation of information, this special type of grammar can be decoded and the encoded messages deciphered if the meaning, the link between thoughts, actions, and things, is analysed and understood in all the three planes. This can become possible through another important aspect of a semiological system, which operates in the case of vestimentary systems, especially when we try to offer a semiotic theory of verbal and non-verbal meaning in vestimentary systems and artefacts in general: it is the awareness that words and things can have many forms and that their similarities and differences should be explicitly demarcated, contextualized and placed on a time-line, if this is possible. Any analytical approach should start with the names given to an artefact, across cultures and periods, as it is a way, the most common one perhaps, to specify identity and change. The non-verbal equivalent can also be analysed in terms that can qualify and quantify this change.

¹⁶ See in the first section of the Chapter 2: 2.1 Organising representations of textiles: Syntagms and Systems.

In our written sources, isolated cases of garment accessories can appear in a regulative body of laws, such as the prohibition against laymen marrying “veiled” nuns or kidnapping consecrated women (as in the Capitularies of Abbot Ansegisus of Saint Wandrille);¹⁷ or else to accentuate a situation in a poem, as with the reference to silk weaving and embroidery in a household in mid-5th - century Provence,¹⁸ but such references can also appear in all other genres of texts, narrative sources such as hagiography, epistolography and historiography, cartularies and inventories, and normative texts. A textile artefact can be enumerated in a Polyptych, among the goods that belong to an abbey, as it is the case with the vestments in the churches of the villas Courtisols and Beine in the Polyptych of Saint Remi of Rheims.¹⁹ Woolen and linen textile production is a significant part of the fiscal obligations of some of the tenants of an abbey, such as Anganildis, a woman weaver, in the *villa supra mare* who appears in the Polyptych of Irminon.²⁰ In these brief examples, the textile artefact or else its technological structure, in this case in its written form, is transformed into a “representation” and acquires a specific contextualized meaning within an imaginary “language” of other representations, and is transliterated by the author through a conceptual “translation” of its symbolic and material qualities by the way of its specific location in a system, where it makes sense to an audience.

¹⁷ *Ansegisi Abbatís Capitularium collectio Libri IV*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.) (*MGH Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), Lib. I, clauses 45, 57, 71, 72, Lib. II, clause 40, pp. 401-404, 423, “Item placuit, ut quicumque episcoporum necessitate perclitantis pudicitiae virginalis, cum vel petitor potens vel raptor aliquis formidatur, vel si etiam aliquo mortis periculoso scrupulo compuncta fuerit, ne non velata moriatur, aut exigentibus parentibus aut his ad quorum curam pertinet velaverit virginem, seu velavit ante XXV annos aetatis, non ei obsit concilium.”

Also for the use of the veil as a single sign extracted from a garment system as a qualifier of a social category “*Ut nullus post tonsuram capillos usu populari nutrire presumat, nec velata relicto velo secularem habitum sumat*” *Concilium Neuchingense* (772), Werminghoff A., (ed.), (*MGH Conc Aevi Merovingici et Aevi Carolini* I, (Hannover, 1906), clause 18, p. 103.

¹⁸ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, XXII, (*MGH Auct Antiquiss* 8, pp. 196-199, p. 249.

¹⁹ *Le Polyptyque et les listes de cens de l'abbaye de Saint Remi de Reims, (IXe- XIe siècles)*, Devroey J.P., (ed.), (Reims, 1984), p. 29, Courtisols : “*Est in praescripta villa ecclesia in honore sancti Martini sacrata, habens velamina altaris II; pallium I, corporales de glidsa II*” and Beine, p. 31: “*planete II, una de cendato indiata, altea lanea rubea; albe II; stole II*”.

²⁰ *Polyptique de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, Longnon A., (ed.), 2 vols., (Paris, 1895). [repr. Genève, 1978], Under the heading “+ isti sunt mansi serviles: ...34. Anganildis, ancilla, habet infantem I, Anganildis. Tenet hospicium habentem de terra bunuarium I. Facit camsilem de lino dominico; pacit pastas VI; et aliud servitium quod ei injungitur”.

The textile artefact can be more than a simple garment accessory. For instance, in the case of *velum*, “veil”, the word both denotes a real object and also serves, as in the *velatae* cited above, as a representation carrying a symbolic value specific to the text. Here one can easily observe that the word characterises a social category of females who were actively involved in the life of the Church: The veil - and the whole system representative of the monastic habit or other forms of ecclesiastical clothing - is linked to one or more social categories of females included in a group - although the *velatae* may or may not specifically refer to formally consecrated women; we do not know for sure if *velatae* refers to more than one distinct ecclesiastical group such as the *diaconae*, nuns, or hermits and women with the gift of prophesy . The veil of the kind mentioned in the ecclesiastical Councils is linked to a form of social exclusion, setting them apart from the other category of women in the text, the violated women, the *raptae*. The word *velata* is however found in other contemporary sources as a signifier of much more than this as well, given that its use is extended to widows and married women too.

At this point, one needs to identify and to classify types of systems of objects; for a taxonomy of this kind could help to explore, and organise the interrelation between, diverse categories of material. Such an approach is an important starting point, but it does have risks when we want to analyse the shifts of meaning of textile words and objects, as taxonomies of this kind usually are better at organising different categories of material than at dealing with change.

For example, if one takes the words that were used at given times to describe textile artefacts, one soon discovers that, even if their grammatical form remains the same, they undergo a process of their own, peculiar to each one of them, which claims a life of its own - as they might, for example recall an obsolete usage, as the *vittae*, the late Roman headbands had been,²¹ or else reflect changes in the vocabulary used for objects where there are actual shifts in meaning of the real garments or their model imaginary equivalents. One example of this is the difference between the *vittae* and the *bindan*²² in

²¹ See Chapter 2, 2.7. The history of *vitta* and *velum* on a time-line, pp. 123-124.

²² These are in the wills of Byrhtic and Ælfswith n °11, see Whitelock D., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, (Cambridge, 1930), p. 284-285, bequeathing half a golden “band”, probably a heirloom, and the will of Wulfwaru n °21 who passed down a band worth twenty mancuses (ibidem, p. 64, 20-21).

Anglo-Saxon wills, which might denote a change in form, the first of these words being used for golden-woven brocade braids worn by women until the end of the 6th century, the second evidenced much later, but probably in use as early as when the *vittae* were in fashion, as evidenced in Anglo-Saxon archaeology of the 6th and the 7th century, to denote woolen tablet-woven braids made of colourful yarn.²³

Furthermore, the meaning and the function of words describing objects in different linguistic contexts shifts according to the needs of a text or to the idiolect of the writer. The same word can also describe different things in texts written at the same time and place or even in the same text.

The same word can be used as a metaphor or a simile and also literally, on the same line. It is also possible that the word can have two separate meanings and that the author is taking full advantage of that. Whatever might be the case, however, it is always a cultural message that is being transmitted.

My aim here is to try to interpret or decode this incredibly complex message, and to explore its relationship to the actual artefact. This applies to all forms of the object, its linguistic form, its material form and the general cognitive model which underlies both forms of the textile artefact. The clothing systems have different structures: the textual-verbal descriptions are full of nouns and adjectives qualifying the textile; the archaeology is most obviously the equivalent of the actual noun, but also hints at social and economic structures and decisions, which leads us on to the verbs, that is to say the actions that led to production and the ways the clothes were put on.²⁴ All that pertains to cultural information forms a common language structure; all information therefore will be organised in the form of vestimentary systems, which can be ascribed to different social functions, economic and transactional decisions and cognitive values. A common platform and a common vocabulary is needed, in order to draw and combine information onto a common basis out of the different source materials we have at our disposal. The interpretation of this cultural information and its correlations with the empirical world is

²³ Walton-Rogers P., *Cloth and Clothing in Anglo-Saxon England*, (York, 2007), pp. 90-91, for the colourful braids from Scorton (grave 9).

²⁴ The application of the concepts of speech and language and its structures, vertical and horizontal- the systems and the syntagms - in every different system of information goes back to theories of semantics of Saussure as organising principles of all possible structures of information. See Barthes R., *Elements of Semiology*, (trans.) Lavers, A., (New York, 1967), pp. 35-65, passim.

what in fact constitutes the problematic of meaning. In the section that follows I am going to describe more closely the main properties of the source material of this thesis and its particular referents: to explore the distinctions in usage and function between different kinds of archaeological finds, the difference in values and representations among different types of textual evidence of dress and textiles and find out if there are possibilities to find links and associative relationships between the textual and the artefactual evidence.

1.3 Of the subject matter and of the source material, of persons, of language and of things

Before going into more detail about the problems involved when we are dealing with changes in the meaning of words, it is essential to present the essential subject matter of the linguistic forms of textiles, of the material vestiges and of the actions that led up to them. It is almost impossible to discuss an object and to reconstruct the process of its production without knowing first what it is. We should bear in mind the distinction between the words in the written record describing either a symbolic representation of an artefact or groups of them, for example in a hagiographical text or an exegetical text, and the words that correspond more closely perhaps to the corporeal form of an object *per se*, as in an inventory, if it ever had any correspondence to reality, or else a royal capitulary such as the *Capitulare de Villis*, which includes lists of fabric and clothing, probably idealised, as part of the description of obligations of a royal *villa*.²⁵ The first group shows that garments and other textiles and woven or composite dress accessories systems crop up in the written sources as a representation, i.e. as a substitute for something else. They operate consciously or unconsciously as an integral and active part of a cognitive formation, facilitating the perpetuation of a religious or secular political system, an ideological device of control and social stabilisation, as a paradigm, or as a metaphor, or

²⁵ *Capitulare de villis* (800 vel ante?), in *Karoli Magni Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (*MGH*) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 24, 43, 70, pp. 85-91.

a simile. The conscious or unconscious decisions of the writer can sometimes reflect the motives behind the choice of words, and this is particularly clear when the citation is a direct reference and thus even more obviously, consciously, a linguistic substitute for a real artefact, as is the case with the garments that were bequeathed in a will in Ravenna, in 564, which comprise a entire system of men's clothing, with descriptive information about the colour, the quality, the quantity, the decoration, and the weave of some of them.²⁶ The terms that are employed contain layered and variagated information. In this case cognitive systems and opinions can be deciphered on the basis of the different nuances in the meaning of a textile, which is thus a sign of a social role within a system.

In both the conscious and the unconscious decisions of the writer, the words as objects and the objects as words appear when they stand in for something else in the sources. This is often so closely associated to a system of belief, or ideology in general, that it seems plausible to ask: what does this mean? When textile artefacts are used, either for their representational value or as a reference to real objects in a text, they would be the replacement of something tangible for both the writer and an intended audience. In both cases we should also recognise the nuances of both real and symbolic value in the eyes and the ears of the writer and the readers and listeners of different levels of literacy and textual comprehension and evaluation.

We also need to recognise that these distinct categories, each separated by a thin line, that is the real and representational, symbolic and corporeal, reflect the conscious and unconscious decisions of the writer; and that a similar kind of human agency also exists in the other kind of evidence that will be used here, the material record. All actions that begin with the exploitation of physical and human resources and involve the means of production, exchange systems and commoditization processes of textiles, incorporate a great number of decisions of individuals whose values are as much inscribed within a comparable symbolic framework - comparable to the above-mentioned literary environments - as they are dictated by necessity.

²⁶ See Chapter 3.5 Historical sources: Was there ever a standardisation of values and an objectification of these values in belts and girdles? The examination of artefacts from testaments. See *infra* pp. 229-231. A reconstruction of a vestimentary system of the 6th c. Ravenna from a will is attempted there, found in Tjäder J.O., *Die Nichtliterarischen Lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445-700*, (Lund, 1954), 19/1, pp. 242-246.

It is important to see that this distinction between two kinds of mental categories - the textile that is perhaps seen as more appropriate to look like that, according to early medieval idealisations, and the textile that in reality is like that and cannot change - applies to both types of source material. This can help us to form the basis of a homogeneous approach, and it makes possible the organisation of diverse types of material in systems that offer grounds for analogies and comparative analysis.

If we accept that an object, a textile artefact, is also a sign, encompassing not only technological information but also a role, having a meaning and a specific cultural content, it is clear that material remains can also be endowed with representational and symbolic values. The material record of artefacts - which are indeed very rarely found on sites when it comes to cloth, although less rare when it comes to weaving implements - ²⁷ also consists of separate categories: chance finds in a certain phase of a site, e.g. a mitten and two fragments of blankets from the Dorestad market-place, ²⁸ or stratified finds in closed assemblages, e.g. in the bed burial in Swallowcliff Down, ²⁹ or objects deliberately preserved as relics, e.g. the *velamina* of the Anglo-Saxon saints Harlindis and Relindis preserved in Maaseik. ³⁰ A chance find *in situ* can still be as much a multidimensional cultural product as a work of art or a holy relic, in that although it may have been produced mechanically and not preserved but disposed of, it still reflects the conscious technological decisions of a society at a certain point in time. A relic, for its part, encompasses the conscious efforts of society to preserve it as a symbol, although of course its meaning may vary over the generations. In the case of the chance survival of objects from closed assemblages, such as a plainly woven piece of cloth that could serve its purpose as a shroud, the latter takes on a specific cultural meaning in its use and function as an essential part of a ritual, if it is used in one. All three kinds of surviving material evidence, the relics, the chance finds or the finds in a specific stratigraphical

²⁷ As in the examples of survival of both cloth and especially textile equipment from late 8th- 9th century Coppergate in York, see Walton-Rogers P., *Textile Production at 16-22 Coppergate, The Archaeology of York. The Small Finds 17/11*. Council for British Archaeology, CBA, (York, 1997).

²⁸ Van Es W.A., Verwers W.J.H., *Excavations at Dorestad I: the harbour: Hoogstrat 1*, Nederlandse Oudheden 9, Kromme Rijn Project 1, (Amersfoort, 1980).

²⁹ Dickinson T.M., "A Saxon Bed Burial on Swallowcliff Down," *Archaeological Journal* 147 (1990), pp. 41-68.

³⁰ Budny M., Tweddle D., "The early medieval textiles at Maaseik, Belgium," *Antiquaries Journal* 65 (2) (1985), pp. 353-389.

context *in situ* - the latter of which are the most likely to include industrial structures and tools, and which also include finds from burials, and are more likely to preserve clothing - can supply us with a huge spectrum of different qualities and quantities of information and transmit a variety of cultural attitudes-. For two groups of surviving material, the relics and the finds from burials, it can indeed be argued that they represent and that they are the real substitutes for certain cultural values, much as words are.

There is always an issue about whether technology and its products - that is technological solutions, developments and technique, the technological loans between different cultures and the convergence of these solutions- can be addressed and analysed in the same terms as cultural and symbolic systems. This is even harder to discern when the source material – the archaeology of textiles - also poses the problem of archaeological interpretation. If we accept that there is an ideological element in technical choices, which of course is true up to certain point, in that such choices are peculiar to distinct social formations, these choices, too, can take on the character of a system, with units which operate within a language, a form of communicating information.³¹ In this sense, all kinds of material evidence, even utilitarian chance finds, have a representational value as much as a real value, because information about how they were made and what they were made of communicates information about both the wearers and the weavers, and can possibly allow for some speculation about their particular view of their world, and more information about their place and role in a society.³²

³¹ As argued in the analysis of technological choices and the language used in technology through a linguistic- anthropological perspective, in the work of the ethnologist Leroi-Gourhan A., *Le geste et la parole .Vol I: Technique et langage*, (Paris, 1964), pp. 35-36 and pp. 396-403; and also in idem, *Milieu et Techniques*, (Paris, 1972), p. 27. In the first, it is argued that the developments in weaving can be influenced by non-technological variables, such as ideology and cultural referents. To this should be added I. Hodder's contribution to this discussion in Hodder I., *Reading the Past. Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology*, (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 1-17. He argues that up to a certain extent, cultural elements and social relationships, that are defined by a number of non-technical variables, can be traced in the actions of the individual artisan -the weaver -and his/her actions. In *Milieu et Techniques*, it is argued that techniques in weaving follow a predictable, irreversible and linear trend.

³² See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures about the technical solutions pertaining to types of looms and the great variety of evidence that there were available to weavers in the early middle ages.

1.4 Previous studies: The historiography of historical and archaeological research of vestimentary systems within the field of early medieval studies.

Now that a basis of the subject matter, the notion of a clothing system, the problematics of the source material and some initial aims of this thesis have been presented, the historiography for the subject should be set out briefly so as to offer a well-defined characterization of this work among medieval studies. I need to set out now the historical context of the disciplines and subdisciplines that formed the background of the present work so that a reader can better contextualize its meaning, its aims and the intellectual legacy which lend it its form. This is an interdisciplinary task based on a critical overview of the wide cognitive background of Historical studies of the early middle ages. The discussion and interpretation of its specific subject of focus, the usage and the meaning of early medieval textiles in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, required at the same time the synthetical, analytical and comparative skills used within the whole corpus of the documentation, the textual early medieval material, and the early medieval archaeology, both mortuary and of settlements, and the use of diverse methodologies.³³

A critical assessment of a wide range of current historical narratives of Anglo-Saxon England and Francia was required for the understanding and interpretation of the social and cultural platform of the textual evidence across Merovingian and Carolingian Francia and Anglo-Saxon England. For this reason, it is essential in this section and the next, to frame clearly first the historiography of historical and archaeological research on the wider field of early medieval studies and also into the more specific areas which were relevant to my research as mortuary archaeology and the particular subject of this thesis, archaeological textiles. In the next section I will try to explain the influences on my methodological choices to help better define the character of this thesis and its place in early medieval studies. Current historiography of the period under examination is exceptionally rich, especially after the systematic publication of a great number of

³³ Cf Appendix I and II, the corpus of material evidence comprising of most known and some unknown - archaeological data of early medieval cemeteries not only in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, but for comparative purposes that become more clear in the course of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, Longobard, Alamannic, Bavarian and Visigothic burial records.

Anglo-Saxon and Frankish primary sources in the last forty years and synthetic historical works based on historical criticism of the post-Annales school.³⁴ Only to mention a few experts on Frankish and /or Anglo-Saxon England: I. Wood, P. Fouracre, C.J. Arnold, J. Smith, J. Nelson, N. Higham, M. Sot, P. Riché. When the subject of this research required a more thematic focus on the relations between the world of the dead, and also the special dead and the living, - as when dealing with mortuary archaeology and relics- one cannot exclude the contributions of P. Geary and J.C. Picard.

Despite the duality set on an equal footing, of the textual and material documentary sources of this study, I have to admit that primarily it was born out of an archaeological enquiry into early medieval artisans and production. The current studies of material production embrace history and historical method to produce comparative historical studies focusing on the economic, social and cultural significance of material remains and artefacts and artisans in the early medieval world; they also face issues of historical change and continuity and issues of ethnicity; to name only a few researchers in this field who influenced this work: C. Wickham, P. Devroey, F. Menant, and on ethnicity W. Pohl. Classic studies on historical documentation on the more particular subject of weavers and textile production have been worked out by L. Kuchenbuch, D. Herlihy. In the last ten years there is very systematic work on methodology and history of the discipline of early medieval archaeology by B. Effros.

In contrast to the above, the historiography of the interdisciplinary studies of minor arts, metalwork accessories, vestimentary systems especially of the kind that is combining historical sources and archaeology is not very rich. Scholars in the field are Vierck H. in the past, currently M. Martin and G. Owen-Crocker, C. Treffort, D. Koslin, J. Snyder, N. Crummy, each addressing the material that is particular to their national tradition. Art History studies of clothing in the middle ages in general has been the subject of a few 80's and 90's studies by D. Cardon, O. Blanc, E. Coatsworth, M. Pastoureau, S. Gordon, and J. Burns.

Relevant and well-known archaeological work of the pioneers of processual and post-processual methodologies in the field and in publication by scholars who started

³⁴ Cf for the work consulted in this thesis see the names of the scholars mentioned above as also in the next section, in the Bibliography of Secondary sources, Volume II.

making critical assessments and using methodologies independent of pervading historical frameworks in the last 25 years are: V. Evison, T. Dickinson, Hines J., M. Carver, S. Chadwick-Hawkes; for Frankish archaeological contexts: E. James, G. Halsall, P. Périn, A. Dierkens, J.C. Picard also, E. Hubert, B. Young and more recently C. Treffort, H. Gallinié, M. Lauwers, D. Iogna-Prat, N. Duval, J. Guyon.³⁵ These have, each in his own way influenced the treatment of my material.

In the 90's the kind of archaeological work that seemed to have been missing in any interdisciplinary study, finally appeared: this is the work on gender and material culture by R. Gilchrist. The rare comparative archaeological analysis between Francia and Anglo-Saxon England can be represented by M. Welch. After the late 90's and in last ten years, more comparative archaeological assessments about East and West appear, including some discussion of costume and imported accessories in the recent work of A. Harris. The analysis and interpretations of metalwork artefacts and dress accessories in Anglo-Saxon England are the main subject in the work of N. Stoodley, while innovative trends appear in the work of Guy Halsall combining methods of evaluation of artefact types with legislation and other texts with study of mentalities over large Frankish areas. Archaeological analysis that seeks to deconstruct ethnicity in favour of local identities in the field of early medieval cemetery archaeology can be represented nowadays by A. Reynolds and primarily in the works of S. Lucy. Another key scholar to address forgotten issues in Anglo-Saxon archaeology is S. Crawford whose work breaks new ground in the usually underrepresented in the mortuary record Anglo-Saxon childhood.

In the last twenty five years the work of H. Vierck in dress and metalwork in Francia mostly, which has drawn comparisons with the Viking and Mediterranean world, has been most insightful. The specific topic of Anglo-Saxon early medieval

³⁵ Participating in the collective works in Frankish archaeology such as the project of several volumes, of Duval N., (ed.), *Atlas de monuments paléochrétiens de la France, Naissance des arts chrétiens*, (Paris, 1991), Duval N., Guyon J., (eds.), vol. I *Sud-Est et Corse*, (Paris, 1995), Maurin L., (ed.), *Les premiers monuments chrétiens de la France*, vol II *Sud-Est et Centre*, (Paris, 1996), Gauthier N., (ed.), vol III *Ouest, Nord et Est*, (Paris, 1998), the project: *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule, des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle*, Gauthier N., Picard J.C., (eds.), vol I, Duval Y., Février P. Guyon J., (eds.), vol II, (Paris 1986), Lauwers M., *Naissance du cimetière: lieux sacrés et terre des morts dans l' Occident médiéval*, (Paris, 2005), Iogna-Prat D., *La Maison Dieu: une histoire monumentale de l' Église au Moyen Âge*, (Paris, 2006).

archaeological textiles *per se* started with the immense number of publications covering the second part of the 20th century by E. Crowfoot, who alongside S. Chadwick-Hawkes created the basis of all systematic study of Anglo-Saxon textiles in a period of parallel interest and activity in Anglo-Saxon archaeology. J.P. Wild, a late Roman archaeologist was then the first to set the pace for a number of studies of high standards that brought the discussion of cloth and weaving within the wider area of early medieval studies in its own right. R. Delmaire and M. Harlow are also late Roman experts on sartorial expression whose work has been useful in interdisciplinary studies such as the present one. Today, archaeological work on textile craft production artefacts in relevance to gender in Anglo-Saxon England, includes the very recent work by S. Harrington on weaving swords, and the work on modes of production in Anglo-Saxon England by P. Henry. The systematic excavation, study of textiles and the creation of a working data base for Anglo-Saxon textiles included in the English Heritage on-line site are the main focus of P. Walton-Rogers' extensive work in the North of England. Another data base of Anglo-Saxon textiles from excavations exists in the University of Manchester which is not on-line yet, but its records are accessible to researchers today. I have been able to use these databases and I am grateful to the researchers mentioned above for that, as this task would have been entirely out of my reach without the result of their coordinated efforts. The ASKED, the Anglo-Saxon Kent Electronic Data base, is another collaboratively built research tool at the UCL Institute of Archaeology, developed with S. Brooks and M. Welch, (not on-line yet).³⁶ Frankish archaeological textiles have been the subject of archaeological publications in the work of archaeologists with more general interests like R. Boyer, or J.P. Laporte in the 70's until the very systematic quantitative and qualitative work on West European textiles by L. Bender-Jørgensen appeared in the early 90's. There has yet to be a coordinated effort to publish Frankish archaeological textiles although there are some helpful collective comparative studies of mortuary and other aspects of early medieval archaeology of the period in Francia today. During these

³⁶ Data base of archaeological textiles used in Sue Harrington, *Aspects of gender identity and Craft Production in the European Migration Period. Iron weaving Beaters and Associated Textile Making Tools from England, Norway and Alamannia*, Brit. Archaeol. Reports, Inter, Ser. 1797, (Oxford, 2008). More about these Anglo-Saxon data bases and their diverse methodologies in relation to the methodology I have chosen here in the methodological section see Chapter 3: C. Problems and challenges of the archaeological material 3.6 A note on archaeological method in reference to burial archaeology and dress accessories: metalwork and textile finds, pp. 233-242.

last years, there is a group (C. Moulhérat, A. Lorquin, M. Desrosiers) studying and publishing systematically archaeological textiles in the Musée des Tissus de Lyon, operating as part of the Centre de Recherche et de la Restauration des Musées de France.

1.5. Research models and legacies: the genealogy of the methodological approach of this thesis.

This project is indebted to various subdisciplines and to the scholars who opened new avenues of thought and research. It draws elements from historical analysis, historical criticism and historical and post-processual archaeological approaches of the work of most scholars mentioned above, discourse analysis and analysis of sociolinguistic patterns in early medieval Latin sources. It thus inevitably had to involve the synthesis of much previous work, although the information derives from updated archaeological material from Francia in a wider sense including Alamannia and Bavaria, Anglo-Saxon England and also localities such as Lombard Italy, Visigothic Spain for comparative reasons. As such, it can claim a place within a number of different research “genealogies”, or it can be assessed as a primarily archaeological synthesis of an interdisciplinary nature, utilising history of material culture and researching into the wider historical and cultural background of the wide period under scope. From the historiography of my subject above, it can be assessed that very few efforts have been made towards the parallel examination on a broad basis of Anglo-Saxon archaeology and Frankish archaeology; no systematic and accurately updated comparative studies of this kind exist as it is very difficult to research especially into the hugely disseminated record of the Anglo-Saxon but especially, the Frankish data comprising of modern, 20th c. and 19th c. publications. There have been different national traditions, and methodologies and one who would take upon themselves the task should have a clear list of criteria to use on this material. Some thoughts and solutions on the issues that could block a large scale enquiry such as this will follow in the next section. Because of this, and other issues, there has never been an attempt to assess archaeological mortuary data

and relics on a comparative basis and extract material pertaining to a more focused subject matter such as the textiles and dress accessories.

Moreover, although a “Clothing system” analytical device has long been introduced by R. Barthes, the few studies in art-history mostly - mentioned above- that utilised it have only incorporated it superficially as an idea imposed on their material and did not use semantics as a tool to organise, differentiate, analyse it as I am trying to do here. I am using this device in particular, to form a common basis of a theory of meaning that is used to examine critically a comparison between linguistic material, texts and archaeology. In this sense, I am researching method as well. Nevertheless, the organising principle and the patterns that constitute the analytical categories – that is, the all the “whats” and the “hows” that dictated the “whys” – have had to be invented anew, to address the questions one would impose on this kind of material.

These two points of departure - the archaeological analysis of comparative material and the interdisciplinary task to assess meaning using semantics- are the signifiants of the method tested in this thesis. Interdisciplinary or ancillary disciplines used here from the wider field of humanities, include the studies in early medieval Sociolinguistics by M. Banniard, read under the light of R. McKitterick’s work on Frankish literacy and linguistic expressions and identity.³⁷ Through R. Barthes I was introduced to Saussurian Semantics, to studies of Structural Linguistics, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism; there is recent work which posited new solutions and dilemmas that had to do with the body in language and the meaning of the accessories on clothed bodies: the theories of corporeal semantics by H. Ruthrof.³⁸ Also essential for this task had proved to be the classic studies on societies, things and people by anthropologists like C. Levi-Strauss, M. Mauss and I. Kopytoff and sociologists like P. Bourdieu who also exemplified the meaning of weaving in Berber societies.³⁹

³⁷ Banniard M., *Viva voce. Communication écrite et communication orale du IVe au IXe siècle en Occident latin*, (Paris, 1992); McKitterick R., “Latin and Romance: an historian’s perspective”, in Wright R., (ed.), *Latin and the Romance Languages in the Early Middle Ages*, (London, 1991), pp.130-145; McKitterick R., (ed.), *The Carolingians and the Written word*, (Cambridge, 1995), esp. pp. 221-228.

³⁸ Ruthrof H., *Semantics and the Body: Meaning from Frege to the Postmodern*, University of Toronto, (Chicago, 1997); Ruthrof H., *The body in language*, (London and New York, 2000).

³⁹ Bourdieu P., trans. Nice R., *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16, (Cambridge, 1977).

1.6 Early medieval archaeology and its inherent problems.

Before I embark on the main objectives of this thesis, I have to discuss first a number of issues inherent in early medieval archaeology in general. A more specialised discussion of the issues that challenge the research of mortuary archaeology in reference to dress and textiles will be facilitated later on. It will be taken up in Chapter Three because in this way the problematization will be associated directly with the empirical material that follows.⁴⁰ The qualitative and quantitative disparity of the grave good assemblages that made up the archaeological empirical material came up most prominently when I had to illustrate the empirical basis of my argumentation in a data base in Vol II of this Thesis. The selection of the material in Appendices I and II, and the inclusion, exclusion, evaluation and comparison of certain dress accessories, artefacts and burials with their textual equivalents throughout this Thesis had to take into consideration criteria which required that some issues should first be resolved:⁴¹

Old and/or partial excavations provide researchers with generalised accounts of material quite frequently, and do not include the contexts or misrepresent and downplay some classes of data. For example, reliable and independently conducted anthropological studies in relevance to ascribing biological sex to skeletons has been a very recent innovation.⁴² Significantly, in the 19th and the greater part of 20th century very important data according to modern criteria, could have been discarded as the stress was on the description of the finds, until after the first half of the 20th c., the most ornate in preference, not on the site *per se* at times, and these set apart from the relevant

⁴⁰ See above note 36, Chapter 3, pp. 233-242.

⁴¹ See the data bases of the sites, the contexts and the artefacts contextualised, discussed, dated and interpreted in Vol II, Appendix I, and Appendix II.

⁴² For a period, in Continental archaeology, the only feature of interest relevant to human organic remains was of the distinctions between germanic skulls and the skulls “of all the rest”. And still, even today, the sexing of skeletons in laboratories is not completely independent of bias, see Halsall G., “Archaeology and the Late Roman Frontier: The So-Called “Föderatengräber” reconsidered”, in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ÖAW, (Wien, 2000), pp. 169-173 and discussion of his finds in Effros B., *Merovingian Mortuary archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*, (Berkeley, 2003), p. 109.

ecofacts and its relationship to any settlement and infrastructure networks.⁴³ In much of the work employed here, I had to rely on every possible detail available and try to find information about all finds including the less ornate and the badly corroded and some of their whereabouts; if this was not possible I could not include the particular finds and the site in my data base. On this basis, I decided to exclude older or partial excavations which could not meet the above criteria. Partial excavations were included when the quality of the documentation and possibilities for parallels in the features and the finds allowed for a diagnostic section at least to be analysed. Stratigraphy also, a keystone in archaeology, is an issue when one is trying to make sense of the vertical sequence of the layers and the relative dates that can be assigned to the content of the layers. This presents few problems in a modern excavation. Unfortunately, in older excavations, plans were problematic, and as S. Lucy points out, the excavators of a number of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries seemed to have had an aversion to inter-cutting graves, to the extent that many archaeologists believe that these graves must have been marked in some way.⁴⁴ In this case, one has to hope for a full description-including depth and dimensions, soil features, cross-cutting features - and keep notes next to each grave, plot-out a new plan to make sense of the synchronic phases of the contexts and the finds consequently, and check out their chronologies and interpretations -or else decide to exclude the site altogether-.⁴⁵ There have been more occurrences of use of horizontal stratigraphy in the recently excavated Continental material, within the last two decades, but I had to keep in mind that this is facilitated by the usual pattern in most row-grave cemeteries: burials start in one area of the cemetery and spread out from it. In Britain, it seems that various

⁴³ See Vallet F., “Les Tombes de Chef, Reflet de l’ Histoire de la Conquête”, in idem, (ed.), *La Picardie, Berceau de la France*, Exhibition Catalogue, (Amiens, 1986), pp. 113-119, where she reinterpreted the distributions of “aristocratic objects” from the classic row-grave cemeteries in Picardy excavated in the late 19th- early 20th century by Eck, Pilloy, Moreau, (see infra vol II Bibliography), and suggested a relation to their distribution to the Frankish royal organisation and the Roman towns in the region.

⁴⁴ Lucy S.J., *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, (Stroud, 2000), pp. 21-23 for this and more examples like this in the section on “stratigraphic and cross-dating methods”, pp. 21-25.

⁴⁵ One instance apart from numerous cases included in the Appendix I and II where I had to plot out a new plan on the old and partial excavation plan is the case of Varangéville. I did this in the way described here because it included very well documented (and photographed) rare textile material. See below in Chapter 3, Section 3. 9 Regional features of belts and of associated fabrics and dress, pp. 275-294.

parts of cemeteries seem to have been in use at the same time- these were interpreted as family plots or as burials of household retainers.⁴⁶

A need to evaluate the changing strategies of excavations comes up very clearly in comparative evaluations of older and also modern publications of sites.⁴⁷ The strategy, focus and extent of an excavation can vary considerably and usually forshadow the interpretation: the distinctions in the documentation can be between ascribed wealth, religious and ritual features, status, age, sex and gender, vertical layers and chronology, descriptions of artefacts and/ or examinations of interrelations between the components of a horizontal and synchronical system of assemblages, to name only but a few. The interpretation of personal attire in grave assemblages is not straightforward, and presents quite as many problems as the rest of the grave goods, when and if these are included in an assemblage.⁴⁸ Distinctions in the classes of data- and especially when these concern dress and dress accessories- have a bearing on methodology and alter an interpretation in the final report. These may be chronological rather than social, signify position in life-cycle, change in fashion, imitation of élite standards by low-class people, cases of ethnic assimilation and acculturation, regional differences and various political, ecclesiastical and ideological reasons. These symbolic distinctions are the hardest to detect, and the ones pertaining to ethnicity, religion, politics monopolised attention and attracted the collaboration of historians as well from the middle of the 19th c. The signification of the consequences of historian's and archaeologist's decision to adopt or to reject multidisciplinary strategies in bringing together written documents and material remains

⁴⁶ See some examples discussed in Härke H., "Changing symbols in a changing society: the Anglo-Saxon burial rite in the seventh century", in Carver M., (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 149-165; Hamerow H., Pickin J., "An early Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Andrew's Hill, Easington, Co. Durham," *Durham Archaeological Journal* 11 (1995), pp. 35-66.

⁴⁷ Usually on a site we tend to find some answers to the questions we pose and the actions pertaining to them but excavation is a destructive process and we will never get to know the answers to questions we did not think of, did not know how to, could not, did not have time to, could not afford to, or we were not then interested to ask. Even the most "objective" data come as the result of all the above very subjective, circumstances.

⁴⁸ For more of these issues and challenges see the methodological section of the archaeological data in Chapter 3, also *contra* A. Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West: the Archaeology of Cultural Identity AD 400-650*, (Stroud, 2003), p. 78, where it is posited that the interpretation of attire in graves is usually straightforward in contrast to the very perplexing interpretations of the rest of the grave goods or grave gifts.

are pointed out by S. Lucy, B. Effros and others.⁴⁹ The relationship between history and archaeology has been the main issue of debate, perhaps one of the most critical in the history of the discipline, dictating the methodologies, interpretation and focus for the last 200 years. Historical facts and legal theories based on the surviving Law codes of the barbarian kingdoms were superimposed on the data, or were scrutinized, ignored on purpose or questioned. This issue and secondarily the distance between archaeology and humanities, anthropology and sociology - defining multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity in method- has been the main basis of the discourse in traditional methodologies, and also in New Archaeology, Critical Theory, Structuralist approaches. We can go even further and detect in the desire of scholars to raise the questions of the validity and limitations of the surviving literary sources, the influence of this tradition or the need to break free from it, and consequently their distances from their national archaeological traditions.

Reinterpretation of sites has been unavoidably coloured by the aforementioned debates found in excavation reports. Some sites included in the survey of the early archaeological material in this study, have been reinterpreted, and I had to enter my own evaluation criteria in my effort to approach dress accessories, surviving textiles and metalwork. One aspect of this had a direct influence on the way I had to decide to make a reading of my material. Different methods have a bearing on the arrangement of the associated grave finds in a sequence, characterised by the different criteria used in the typological seriation: in more traditional, older publications of sites I came across the “frequency seriation”, usually when less attention was paid to the particular contexts of finds. This system was found in publications where the focus was on the construction of typologies and the building up of a chronology, and this in comparison with other sites. This method works on the assumption that certain artefacts start rare, become more popular and then they decline, so they can be put in a relative order. It is on this basis that interpretations can be worked out later.⁵⁰ Another method, found in more recent excavation reports, has parallels in the correspondence analysis of artefacts presented in

⁴⁹ See notes 42, 43, 44 and Young B.K., “Le problème franc et l’apport des pratiques funéraires (IIIe-Ve siècles),” *Bulletin de Liaison: Association Française de l’Archéologie Mérovingienne* 2 (1982), pp. 4-18, esp. 4-5.

⁵⁰ See S. Lucy, op.cit., note 44, pp. 22-23.

tables⁵¹ according to the “occurrence seriation”. In this method, no assumptions are made as to the development of the production and consumption of the artefact, but as S. Lucy describes it, the find associations themselves are used to order the artefact type.⁵² This was found to be more useful for both Anglo-Saxon and Frankish assemblages and easier to deal with because most of the contextual information I was looking for was already available and I did not have to scrutinise a report with the hope that I would get more clues, and thus transliterate the facts from a “seriation type a” to “seriation type b”. This latter trend has been in use since the integration of IT in the discipline in the 80’s in the form of synchronic analysis. More variables could be included in the analysis, and this originally fuelled a growing interest towards gender studies and age differentiations, including childhood as also towards the comparative analysis of decorative motifs on metalwork and weave types in textiles in relation to a number of other factors. Research trends of the last decades put stress in horizontal relationships, temporal and spatial, in an effort to view societies as open, non-static systems whose workings could be understood by examining interrelations of its components.⁵³ Usually the studies employing “occurrence seriation” are interpreted on a basis of structuralist approaches which examine the social /ideological factors, and the social identity of individuals but do not recognize a direct relationship between mortuary ritual and life.⁵⁴ I would nevertheless make allowances for a less compartmentalized view of people’s workings as I am going to explain later in the section about the theory of meaning at the beginning of the next section.⁵⁵ To return to the issue of the reinterpretations of sites, which is relevant to the above shifts of criteria of evaluation, there are cases where new

⁵¹ Usually popular in Scandinavia but also used by Halsall G., “Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence,” *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1) (1996), pp. 1-24, esp. pp. 8-15.

⁵² See above note 44.

⁵³ This characterisation of these New Archaeology principles, some still in use today, implemented with new methodological aspects belongs to E. James, in “Burial and status in the Early Medieval West,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Ser. 39 (1989), pp. 23-40, esp. p. 33, voicing his concerns for the mechanistical view of societal change, a concern shared with post-processual archaeologists as well.

⁵⁴ See Pader E.J., *Symbolism, Social relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, 130, (1982), Härke H., “Warrior graves?” *Past and Present* 126 (1990), pp. 22-43; Huggett J.W., “Numerical techniques for burial analysis,” in Wilcock, Lockyear K., (eds.), *Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology 1993*, British Archaeological Report Inter. Ser. 598, (Oxford, 1995), pp. 183-190.

⁵⁵ In this case I think it is interesting to note the influence of Critical Theory in the studies of attitudes to Early Anglo-Saxon Archaeology expressed in the works of H. Hamerow, (see Bibliography Vol II).

suggestions are made on the basis of the material documented more than a hundreds of years earlier, an example would include the case of the sites in Picardy reinterpreted by F. Vallet, (see on p. 36, note 43). Reinterpretation also applies in relation to what constitutes status and privilege. “Poor” graves like the ones in Arlon, and Franchimont (included in the Appendix II) may in fact be the graves of privileged people as this can be conveyed by burial *ad pontentiores*.⁵⁶ Another example of reinterpretation can be demonstrated in the proposition that in the 5th and the 6th centuries most burials took place in cemeteries away from churches; scholars insisted on this even when these burials have been conducted in a christian context. In fact, more and more clues for wooden structures of chapels and *memoriae* that have not been taken into account until previously are revealed once the plans and documentation are re-examined. It is possible that grave finds that have been associated with “pagan burials”, could still be burials *ad sanctos* in a way.⁵⁷ Consequently, I had to re-evaluate all religious, ethnic and status characterisations ascribed to artefacts in both the text and the Appendices.

National archaeological traditions can still be seen in the discourse pertaining to the interpretation of grave finds especially when dealing with costume, dress and ethnicity. Their influence can be detected in the desire to retain traditional methodologies each working on separate issues, special to the history of these schools. The British, German, French schools, all had their roots in antiquarianism of the middle of the 19th century and each one struggled separately pursuing different ends for recognition from academic historians, legal historians in Germany and “chartistes” in France. The British school of early medieval archaeology was distinct in the way that it kept a distance from the notion of “*barbaritas*” and that it developed three distinct approaches to archaeology lasting well after the 1950’s:⁵⁸ a historical approach, focusing on typological series of

⁵⁶ See James E., “Burial and status in the Early Medieval West,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Ser. 39 (1989), pp. 23-40; for more examples see Roosens H., “Reflets de Christianisation dans les cimetières mérovingiens,” *Les Études Classiques* 53 (1985), pp. 11-135.

⁵⁷ See Young B.K., “The Myth of the Pagan Cemetery”, in Karkov C., (ed.) *et alii, Spaces of the Living and the Dead: An Archaeological Dialogue*, American Early Medieval Studies 3, (Oxford, 1997), pp. 61-87; Godou Y., Colin G., “La christianisation des campagnes, IV-VIIIe siècles,” *Gallia Suppl.* 64 (2007), pp. 57-83.

⁵⁸ The main concern of Anglo-Saxon Studies, are phrased by S. Lucy when he cites and comments on the work of J.N.L. Myres, and the focus of British Archaeology, op.cit., note 44, p. 13 as: “the character and distribution of the earliest settlements, the continental provenance of the invaders, the fate of the Romano-British institutions and population.”

artefacts and their understanding through the historical texts and ethnic divisions proposed by Bede mostly.⁵⁹ The work of E.T. Leeds can exemplify that.⁶⁰ Secondly, a typological framework of Chronology based on the art style, in relation to Continental typologies of artefacts, developed by museum scholars represented in the work of N. Åberg and J.N.L. Myres. Third, a collection of the material of county surveys which brought together vast amounts of material - the work conducted under the direction of B. Brown and R.A. Smith falls into this category-. In all the above, the stratigraphy may not have been noted and the plans were not accurate.⁶¹ In the mid 20th c., S. Chadwick-Hawkes and V. Evison, tried to put new political perspectives in the re-writing of the history of “Migration Period” with some concern for the fate of the indigenous population, but still within accepted historical frameworks and an emphasis on the chronology and typology. The most impressive finds of the probably royal burials of the 7th century, have been the subject of constant reinterpretation with a focus on Continental correlations and chronologies.

The French archaeological tradition started with l’ Abbé Cochet in the 1840’s, who sought to reconstruct the past on the basis of all the contents of Merovingian graves and not just the valuables. He was the first who tried to employ all the unearthed material, the *terminus post quem* provided by coins, documentation, and made use of comparative techniques for the interpretation of the sites. Others after him worked on specification and systematisation of stages of development of ancient sepulchres. In their systematic efforts to gain the respect of French academia, the Historians and Art Historians, French archaeologists became too eager to identify the barbarism of the Franks and became reluctant to identify grave goods and structures as part of orthodox christianity, and some of these notions persist even today.⁶² The heirs to Frankish

⁵⁹ “The unreliability of the written sources in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, in the relating of major historical events to archaeological data, made their use for dating early Anglo-Saxon archaeology very limited”, according to Arnold C. J., *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, (London, 1997) [2nd edition], p. 15, in his discussion of the history of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology, op.cit., pp. 1-18.

⁶⁰ For the relevant works of the scholars mentioned in this section of National Traditions, refer to the Bibliography, Vol II.

⁶¹ An example of a report like that (Plan of Taplow, by B. Burgess), discussed in detail in Chapter 3, 3.4 A lexocographical taxonomy of social roles in reference to the functions of the belt in texts, pp. 173-176. It features in Vol II, Figures of Chapter Three, see fig 3.26.

⁶² See Effros B., *Merovingian Mortuary archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*, (Berkeley, 2003), pp. 55-59.

antiquities, French and German scholars took different stances from the concept of “*barbaritas*”: in France their artefacts were not owned as part of the national heritage and were not recognized as Christian even if these were found in sites that had been converted according to the written sources, for more than a century earlier than the finds. This same notion of barbaric distinctiveness became the very essence and an object of national pride in German circles, in a period of struggle for a united Germany. Merovingian antiquities, in France, gained a bad print in comparison to the glorification of the Carolingian period. At the beginning of the 20th century, scholars using multidisciplinary new directions in anthropology and sociology,⁶³ used paradigms from Merovingian graves but it was not until the work of E. Salin in the mid 1950’s that these new fields started to be exploited in order to draw methods about the complexity of the early medieval societies and thus redirect their interpretations. The older monographs I had to include in this material, were highly technical treatises on the typology and chronology of grave goods, very often divorced from any historical documentation. The more recent interpretation of the cessation of the furnished burial practice based on a Spiritualisation of the culture of the 7th century, can be attributed to this National tradition.⁶⁴

The German tradition starts with the Lindenschmits, who, in the middle of the 19th century, applied their contemporary linguistic distinctions on ethnicity and nationality to ancient and medieval written sources to get anachronistic interpretations of archaeological and anthropological data. Contrary to this type of tradition, another branch developed with G. Klem, who used statistical means to plot out grave finds and became the forerunner of Migrationism, and K. Wilhelm who paid attention to the social and religious aspects of the finds.⁶⁵ Both deemed systematic descriptions and cataloguing necessary. Another development in this tradition was the involvement of legal historians

⁶³ Following the lead of Fustel de Coulanges, his pupil E. Durkheim, and M. Weber, establishing sociology as we know it today, also the anthropologists J. Frazer and M. Mauss.

⁶⁴ This trait enabled later the development of New Archaeology methodology. C. Boulanger, digging in the early 20th century, insisted that physical funerary evidence was more reliable than written sources, see Effros, op. cit., note 62, p. 59; Périn P., “À propos de publications étrangères récentes concernant le peuplement en Gaule à l’ époque mérovingienne. La question franque,” *Francia* 8 (1980), pp. 537-552.

⁶⁵ See Effros, op.cit., note 62, pp. 76-77. Migrationism is a concept that explains how traditions might have been transmitted from one culture to another.

in the interpretation of the grave good and paganism issues: they sought to dissociate rituals from legal practice and developed theories still persisting today as the *Gerade* and *Heergewäte*.⁶⁶ Their aim was to decrease the chasm between academia and archaeology and de-ritualize and thus make early medieval Germans appear less “primitive”. G. Kossinna following the Lindenschmit tradition, employed in the first decades of the 20th century different sorts of evidence uncritically to distort the signification of the burial finds and traced the cultural, linguistic, historical and biological factors that determined a separate germanic racial identity. As a result, German scholars, many decades later show some hesitation to employ multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches. In the last decades of the 20th century some traits of this school developed towards interpretations based on the legal system described above, chronologies based on systemic seriation of metalwork and also seeking distinctions of status and the processes of acculturation of different groups of the Franks in the Migration period.⁶⁷

When it comes to the issue of Chronology, generally speaking, there is no reliable absolute and synchronical system of chronology for early medieval archaeology. Chronologies and phasing of the stratigraphy had to be presented for the needs of this thesis in a coherent and homogenous way, a quite difficult task, as for a number of late 19th and mid- 20th century excavations the chronology is vague, not known or cavalier. The discussion and the comparison between sites and finds could not be chronologically accurate and probably synchronically and methodologically erroneous taking into account that there are different traditions of chronology between the Continental and the British excavation reports, and a number of reasons why chronology has been constructed in this way.⁶⁸ For Anglo-Saxon England, there is no generally accepted terminology for the subdivision of Early Anglo-Saxon period.⁶⁹ The Migration period in

⁶⁶ The “dead man’s part”, *Todtenteil* for men and women. Following this interpretation, only the unmovables could pass from one generation to the next. The Barbarian Law codes do not mention however any systematic and homogenous practice of this sort.

⁶⁷ The work of J.Werner, has included very systematic typological seriation of metalwork as well as K. Böhner and H.W.Böhme, in the 50’s-80’s for their work, see Bibliography, Vol II.

⁶⁸ See Arnold C.J., op. cit., note 59, p.16: “Artefacts found on both sides of the North Sea, provide an important reference point, although it would be easy to question the basis of the chronology of such objects on the Continent. The use of English material to support Continental chronologies creates additional problems.”

⁶⁹ The tripartite system of Early, Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon period has been more useful in period divides in historical studies and proved to be less popular -as it was inaccurate- in archaeological reports.

Britain is regarded as ending between AD 560 and 580 and for the 6th century transition the term Later Phase has been introduced, also known as Final Phase of furnished burial within the 7th c.⁷⁰ The date ranges usually given are based on artefact studies, a legacy of the 20th century typological seriation of artefacts approach,⁷¹ as in the Kentish archaeological textiles data base chronology system in ASKED.⁷² On the other hand, the span of the particular periods in the relative chronologies of a particular burial site can be measured in generations, but there can be more interfaces present between these periods and it is seldom that the criteria of the way the data was obtained and dated are explained. In most closed assemblages in Frankish archaeology the typology of artefacts are compared to other data and are thus dated. This system can provide a framework for dating in a span of accuracy of 25 years.⁷³ Nevertheless, most of the recent publications of researchers of sites in Frankish archaeology have been using a system of chronology by centuries, since at times these include Roman and Late Roman strata as well, in a very long span, and because subdivisions within the wider Merovingian and Carolingian period would confuse and not help the studies of the societies in question.⁷⁴ These last wider periods are also used as means of general characterisation of an era in both recent Historiography and Archaeology and I decided to use them as well. I decided to include the dated finds and sites when the description and the documentation was

There inconsistencies and chronological interfaces cannot be described thus clearly in the excavation reports as in the historical narratives. But there is work currently in progress towards a resolution of that problem, see Penn K., Bruggmann B., Høilund Nielsen K., *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon inhumation burials: Morning Thorpe, Sponge Hill, Bergh Apton and Westgarth Gardens*, East Anglian Archaeology 119, (Norfolk, 2008), and see Hines J., Høilund Nielsen K., Siegmund F., (eds.), *The Pace of Change: Studies in Early Medieval Chronology*, Cardiff Studies in Archaeology, (Oxford, 1999); Høilund Nielsen K., "The schism of Anglo-Saxon chronology", in Kjeld J., Høilund Nielsen K., (eds.), *Burial and Society: the Chronological and Social Analysis of Archaeological Burial Data*, (Aarhus, 1997), pp. 71-99.

⁷⁰ Conversion Period has been avoided as it begins with Augustine's mission in 597 and does not coincide with Migration Period.

⁷¹ As C. J. Arnold has pointed out, op.cit., note 59, pp. 15-17, "it is rarely made clear whether the date is one of manufacture of the artefact, its period of use, or the context in which it was found". I accept that in a wider frame of 50 years all these features in the biography of the artefact can be included and most of these issues resolved.

⁷² See in the section above: 1.4 Previous studies: The historiography of historical and archaeological research of vestimentary systems within the field of early medieval studies, In the work of Sue Harrington (op. cit. note 36, p. 2), the Chronology follows the data base of ASKED chronology: Phase I: 475-575, Phase II: 575-650, Phase III: 624-725. Most artefact studies leave the interface between Phases I-II as uncertain.

⁷³ See an example of an attempt for synchronic dating of artefacts from a closed assemblage: Périn P., "Pour une révision de la datation de la tombe d' Arégonde, épouse de Clotaire Ier, découverte en 1959 dans la basilique de Saint-Denis," *Archéologie médiévale* XXI (1991), pp. 21-50.

⁷⁴ The most popular System of Chronology used in the collective studies mentioned in p. 33, note 35.

diagnostic for phases spanning 50 years or more.⁷⁵ I also decided to use the system of centuries throughout for both geographical foci of my study, especially in the cases of burial sites so as to facilitate a consistent basis for comparison, while still working within the limitations imposed by the data.

1.7 A question of Genre: historiography and other written sources employed in comparative historical analysis.

Historians in the past did not ignore the grave goods being unearthed, but employed what they conceived of as more reliable documentary evidence to explain their function. In this thesis, however, I will employ extracts from diverse genres of texts, set in their context, when space permits it, and set a framework of a narrative in interactive renegotiation with the material evidence. The point of departure for this is that it is impossible to approach cultural and social change if I do not compare material between different times and places, and even between different genres of texts. I will discuss here briefly a few thoughts about the empirical problem of having to deal with the diversity of my source material, and try to define this diversity, and point out why I had to deal with it with caution.

I am going to use the texts and the linguistic evidence from the Latin in early medieval Historiography, Chronicles, Annals, Chronographies, Hagiography, Monastic and Episcopal Gesta, Literature, Poetry, Epistolography, Philosophical treatises, works on the Philosophy of Language, Law codes, (late Roman, East Roman, Barbarian), Royal Capitularies, Decrees, Placita, Canon Law: Church Councils, Decrees, Synods; Royal, private and ecclesiastical documents: Testaments, donations, Polyptychs, Diplomas, Royal Charters, Cartularies, Formularies; Monastic Rules, a manual on monastic sign language, liturgical texts: Sacramentaries, Missals, Theological Treatises, Sermons, Bible Commentaries, Hexegetical texts, Homilies.

First, there is an issue of temporal occurrence: some of these genres and sub-genres are more popular in some periods than others: in some societies there was need for

⁷⁵ See above note 71 for the reasons why I chose this time span.

production for more legal documents than others, some can be abundant for a period, like the canons of the Church Councils for the 5th -6th c, or the epistolography, evidence for which recedes in the 7th c. century and rises again in the 9th and 10th centuries.⁷⁶ The historical narratives used here are largely from the 6th and the 7th century, while hagiography covers most of the time span of the textual documentation. There are some Merovingian wills that are used here, but most of the usable corpus in this thesis is from the Carolingian period in Francia and the late Anglo-Saxon period in Anglo-Saxon England. I decided that I would have to deal with this issue separately in each Chapter and try to contextualize my source *ad hoc*.

Another issue is the social milieu of production: All latin sources are products of certain administrative, ecclesiastical and secular élite writers probably conversant in several vernacular languages.⁷⁷ I am also going to illustrate some of my points using some illuminated manuscripts of the 8th -10th centuries deriving from this same cultural milieu and an embroidered inscription from a Carolingian episcopal belt, a product of the royal workshop.⁷⁸ The only case we can have a view on the latinity and literacy of less prominent localities in other social contexts is from the epigraphic evidence, from a corpus of inscribed belt-buckles from Burgundy in the late 5th and 6th centuries.⁷⁹

The third issue has to do with genre. The written sources could not be simply organised under the headings of literary, legal, historiographical and hagiographical sources as such a divide on second thought is not and could not be possible. It has been methodologically impossible to disentangle the historiographical material from the

⁷⁶ I will expand on the occurrence and the reasons for the popularity of some of these genres in the relevant sections of Chapters 2 and 3.

⁷⁷ Apart from the evident multilingualism of ecclesiastical scholars like Alcuin or Hrabanus Maurus, there is a evidence for secular multilingual (in the vernacular languages) and highly cultured (in the latin) élites of the Carolingian period at least, as shown in the libraries testated in the wills of Eccard of Autun and Eberhard of Friuli, discussed later on in Chapter 3, see Riché P., "Les bibliothèques de trois laics carolingiens," *Le Moyen Âge* 69 (1963), pp. 87-104, esp. pp. 101-103.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 3, Goldberg E.J., "*Regina nitens sanctissima Hemma: Queen Emma (827-876), Bishop Witgar of Augsburg, and the Witgar-Belt*", in Weiller B., MacLean S., (eds.), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800-1500*, (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 57-95.

⁷⁹ See Chapter 3, section 3.10, pp. 297-306: Le Blant E., *Les Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaul antérieures au VIII^e siècle*, tom. I, Collections des document inédits sur l'histoire de France, (Paris, 1856); discussed in Treffort C., "Vertus prophylactiques et sens eschatologique d' un dépôt funéraire du haut moyen Âge: les plaques-boucles rectangulaires burgondes à inscription," *Archéologie médiévale* 32 (2002), pp. 31-55.

hagiographical material in works such as the *Gesta Abbatum /episcoporum*.⁸⁰ There is a lot of room for rhetoric, moral discourse, miracles and visions in the historiographical narratives as well, whereas it has been possible to read – using the tool of literary criticism- a hagiographical text as history of a peculiar kind.⁸¹ The functions of these genres in early medieval societies have been different from our own and we cannot impose our own standards to organise them in analytical categories that probably made no sense to the authors. Another point is that we have to observe the ease with which the same authors transcended these boundaries, as most genres were cultivated by the same people, using the same latin terms in a shared supra-regional culture of the same class. Since I am going to deal with latin terms in this thesis, I think this is a point to remember. Gregory of Tours produced both Hagiographical material, treatises and historiography, V. Fortunatus and also Aldhelm could produce prose and verse versions on the basis of the same material. Philosophical and theological treatises and also Sermons could be written by the same author. In the descriptions of dress systems and of textile and dress accessories, I have found a lot of diverse linguistic forms even in the same author and I have tried to detect the reasons why they employed different vocabulary in different genres in Chapters 2 and 3.

A line between the more or less “objective” documentary sources, the legal texts, in the sense that they describe realities, and place relations between objects and persons on an objective basis, is drawn here between the utilitarian documents such as wills, donations and testaments, Polyptychs etc. and the normative sources, Secular and Canon Law. Although we should take the diversity of the chronology and geography in Law very cautiously, we should remember that Laws are always used to demarcate communities and sometimes can serve only as the templates for normative behaviour. It is difficult to find out in what ways the vehicles of royal will, or the will of a Synod where put in practice, bearing in mind that there is considerable variety in the form, shape and social functions among the more or less flexible types of normative texts,

⁸⁰ As also argued by Sot M., “Arguments hagiographiques et historiographiques dans les “Gesta episcoporum”, in Riché P., Patlagean E., (eds.), *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés, IVe-XIIe siècles*, Actes du Colloque de Nanterre 1979, (Paris, 1981), pp. 95-104 ; Lifshitz F., “Beyond Positivism and Genre: Hagiographical Texts as Historical Narrative,” *Viator* 25 (1994), pp. 98-113, esp. p. 103.

⁸¹ See Fouracre P., “Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography,” *Past and Present* 127 (1990), pp. 3-38.

some of these reflecting urgent and immediate needs, others reflecting the solidity of tradition e.g. compare Laws and Placita or Capitularies.⁸² In this work, I had to outline the function and context of the individual legal sources, separately, in most instances. Most of the times it was the more flexible and renewable types of sources like the Church Councils and Capitularies that bore evidence to textile artefacts and dress accessories.

1. 8 The aims of the thesis: symbolic values, cultural categories; consumers and their social roles. Key issues to be addressed in this study.

Now, that I have mediated between the problems of my subject matter and of my diverse material, and situated my method and subject matter within early medieval studies in general, it is time to set my aims related to the particular study of vestimentary systems, the social roles, symbolic values and cultural categories of the people of the early middle ages revealed or concealed by dress and my key issues of this study.

The specific questions that will be addressed here, in the series of case studies that follow, on the basis of both types of source material, are:

1. What were the cultural categories signified by these objects? What do we know about the occurrence and frequency of the objects, real and represented? and which were used as social signifiers by which social groups?
2. What were the social categories that appear as active participants in the consumption of the objects in question? Are these the same as signified by both types of source material?
3. What are the inherent values of the objects themselves? Is there any change in the values detected?

⁸² See Wormald P., *The Making of English Law, vol. 1: King Alfred to the Twelfth century: Legislation and its limits*, (London, 2001), p. 53: "What Merovingians and Carolingians did not do with legal texts is just as striking with what they did. Frankish *lex* was so solidly cast in the mould of Frankish tradition that the greatest kings merely adorned its surface... Frankish capitularies by contrast were left so plastic by kings that only intellectuals like Lupus (or Ansegisus, my comm.) could give them real shape".

One thing that needs explanation here is why the empirical material is organised in the same way, on the same platform of a theory of meaning and in its corresponding categories although the documentary and the archaeological material has to be examined separately most of the time, as I will argue shortly in this section.

It is possible to organise systems of objects, and look for them in both types of source material, as it can be accepted here that a set of conscious and unconscious categories is reflected dialectically both in texts and in artefacts. These categories do exist, and they determine public, private and religious and secular ritual, they regulate and impose social order, they form and are formed by given ideological standards, which are peculiar to given social environments that can interact and intervene with each other, as in the case of the close interaction between cultures. These categories or systems form and shape underlying social structures, they run horizontally and vertically, and they are visible in the organising distinctions witnessed in most historical societies, such as status, rank and gender, age, religion, locality.

The conscious and unconscious systems form the cultural dictates of both material and textual evidence. We can also be given both static and dynamic views of collective and individual mentalities and identities when we see these categories working in the infrastructure of a society where the diachronic and the individual can occur amidst the collective. A representation of an object can coincide with collective representations, as with the Christian ideology of purity incorporated in the white linen altarcloths described by individual authors,⁸³ or the dream or vision of an individual that can mobilise a whole community in the subsequent building of a church, or else can be accepted as a prophetic premonition, at least in its textual representation.

Conversely, in the case of the specific choice of a cloth for a shroud or a relic, it is the individual case and the intentional event that stands out or, in the case of the occasional survival of a cloth fragment, it is the technical, the mechanical, repeated and

⁸³ Gregory of Tours, *Libri decem Historiarum*, (MGH), *Scr rer Merov* 1i, 2nd edn, Krusch B., Levison W, (eds.), (Hannover, 1951), lib. X.16, 506,10 : “*pallam altari fidei usorem dedit*”. In Fortunatus, *Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2,1, 4 , 1, 21, “*linteolo pro palla ponebatur divinum in altare*.” In *Liturgia Gallicana*, PL 72, 43,1, *Missale Gothicum*, Migne P., (ed.), PL 72, 17.5: “*Ne palliis vel ministeriis divitis defunctorum corpora obvoluantur*”, Council of Auxerre in the late 6th century : “*Non licet mortuis nec eucharistiam, nec osculum tradi nec vela vel pallas corpora eorum involui*”: *Synod. Autissiod.* c. 12, *Concilia Galliae* (a. 511-a. 695), Clercq C., (ed.), (Turnhout, 1963,) p. 267.

possibly reversible event that is marked out.⁸⁴ It is difficult to separate the static and dynamic planes, the individual and the collective, when structures and events seem almost inseparable. It is plausible then, to look for conscious and unconscious categories in both types of source material.

There are, all the same, two reasons why the material will be organised in the same systems but examined separately, most of the time: The first is that the nature and the amount of the published excavated material is hardly enough to support a statistical overview or a long time span, and much less provide us with explicit views of mentalities in the usage of vestimentary systems. The published archaeological data for textiles when compared with the evidence for pottery and metalwork looks limited and sporadic, and it can rarely add to our knowledge about the scale of production, but it can inform us about the types of cloth produced, and about changes in techniques and movements and exchange of weaving knowledge in the ways the most common cloth types are produced; and definitely tell something about technical choices. This can support views about both the mechanical and the malleable structures that constitute the patterns of production and consumption.

In funerary contexts, it is true, it is possible to set out quantitative information, and to have a comparative view on both the sporadic and the customary. But this means that there is no uniformity on the quality and quantity of the information derived even within the archaeological record. A further problem is that it is precarious and tenuous to identify certain specific surviving textile objects as being the ones mentioned in written texts. So the material evidence, put into a document-based argument, would only be suggestive, not conclusive. It is preferable that these suggestions should be based on the description and - in an open minded way - the analysis of the functions of all the possible range of objects. Anyway, much can be hidden and distorted in a text that would appear in the archaeology. This aspect could be explored in the cases of “pagan” or “Christian” burials in sites that are considered to have a “Christian” or a “pagan” character, in conjunction with the contemporary theological discourse about Christian burial, and

⁸⁴ For example the textile fragments from the tomb of St Cuthbert, bearing evidence for royal embroidery workshops of the 9th century, see Coatsworth E., “The embroideries from the tomb of St Cuthbert”, in Higham N.J., Hill D., *Edward the Elder 899-924*, (London, 2001), pp. 292-306.

with the possibilities of other factors at work. It is possible that communities who buried their dead in a cemetery could act in separate and distinct ways - giving new meanings to non-secular matters, for example, or using other categories such as local customs, everyday practice, magic, or just, simply, acting out of necessity - and not in the way we are informed that would be the norm from the ecclesiastical authorities who influenced our written record. The processes that dictated the ways furnished burials, which are a major source of information on early medieval vestimentary systems, were conducted, were multidimensional. The facts from the archaeology can therefore appear as blocks of solid information documented in a register, but their meaning and interpretations can be as obscure or distorted and complicated as when examining an ambiguous passage in a text.

In this study, the enquiry will take the following course: I will discuss the written sources first, and the archaeology second, and discuss the links that are relevant and necessary, and are evident or at least not obscure in the two types of the source material. These links will start with technical characteristics, such as information on the colour, decoration and form of textiles and vestimentary accessories, and we will then look for parallels in the archaeological record. When we have a saint's life and the burial of the same saint which has left relics, textiles or any vestimentary accessory that is related to the saint, these will be discussed also. The main links between the two types of sources, however, will be pursued here in the parallel examination of information pertaining to individual regions, and of the most socially relevant information that can be found in both the material and the textual basis of this study. In this way, vestimentary modes, ethics, aesthetics and practices will be set against the qualitative and quantitative information from burial sites, relics and settlements, and the latter will be assessed and organised according to the social categories and the gender and, whenever possible, the age of the people who used the textiles. This makes relevant the questions asked above, about the cultural categories and the inherent values signified by the objects, their occurrence and use by given social groups and change and the ways it is felt in historical and archaeological sources; so the two types of evidence will be used to approach questions of the meaning of vestimentary systems and the ways these systems functioned.

Now that the separate treatment of the two types of material evidence has been set out, and also the aims of the research, I will venture to describe the key issues of this thesis.

One issue is first, the establishment of a common semiotic plane of interaction and comparison between two types of source material, the historical sources and the archaeology. In order to accomplish this, the disparities between the quality and quantity of textual and artefactual evidence and their inherent limitations will also be researched and evaluated. The criteria of the levels of correspondance between the sources will be set out at methodological sections in Chapters 2 and 3.

In relevance to this first issue, there is the issue of research in method. All the immediate aims of this thesis, described on p. 50 above, have to do with meaning in the use of the objects, meaning and evaluation of the objects and in relation to social contexts and personal identities. This is an interdisciplinary task in search of a method to approach meaning in objects in early medieval societies and meaning in the relations between people and their creations in general. This task employs the interpretative tools of the theories of verbal and non-verbal meaning of textiles but could also be used as suggestions for further research directions of other types of linguistic and artefactual expression.

My third issue is to find out ways to extract information about textile and metalwork artefacts from the written sources drawing comparisons between two wide geographical foci, Anglo-Saxon England and Francia and test if I can make my suggestions work. In the next Chapters and the Appendices I will organise it so that I hope it will be possible to a point to visualise and endepen the knowledge about the structure and the role of dress in early medieval societies in reference to the construction of social, local, and personal identities.

Another issue is the task to address the possibilities in the research of the diverse messaging systems which reflect social roles and identities communicated visually through dress and dress accessories. This could enlighten us as to how dress items were worn, why, by whom, central issues encountered in the interpretation of dress items from burial assemblages. In the course of this examination, in Chapter 2 and especially in Chapter 3, the relationship of early medieval people with dress and their concepts about

their bodies will be explored. As an aside to this fourth issue, I will also try to explore and deploy the methodologies of corporeal semantics, the criteria of visibility of the vestimentary display and interactive interpretations of dress between different social groups and the elements that make up the key focus of the apparel.

Moreover, there is a last issue the resolution of which is dependent to the point that the above issues and aims are resolved: if any positive results are assessed after the application of the methods employed here on the material, these could form the premise upon which a new system of artefact evaluation of the finds pertaining to dress from early medieval burials, a key feature of early medieval archaeology, could be suggested.

CHAPTER TWO

A. Methodological aspects of vestimentary systems: a theory of meaning of early medieval dress: Verbal and non verbal semiosis in the representations of textiles in early medieval historical sources and the archaeology.

2.1 Organising representations of textiles: Syntagms and Systems

Most real and represented objects, whether in the written sources or actually surviving as relics or funerary remains, can be organised in semantic categories, either in systems or syntagms.¹ For example, the variations in liturgical textiles which have the same function and possibly not a very different form, such as headgear, form a system. Conversely, syntagmatic units or compound signs or syntagms of signs do not necessarily have meaning in and of themselves, but can take their meaning as they are combined into more complex patterns of signs e.g. the descriptions of the full ensemble that a saint is wearing,² or the vestiges of different parts of clothing and armour in the burial of the chieftain in Lavoye³ where élite military costume is evidenced. All systems and syntagms can be dealt with both as symbols and as representations of symbolic values. A set of systems ordered in the same way can form syntagmatic units too.⁴

¹ By the term system is meant the parallel juxtaposition of sets of pieces, or parts of details or accessories. If these sets constitute different vestimentary systems, the units cannot be worn all at the same time. Any nuance of a variation corresponds to a change in the meaning of the clothing item. See Barthes R., *Elements of Semiology*, (trans). Lavers A., (New York, 1967). By the term syntagm is meant the sequence of words or other kind of signs, or units that exist in a particular syntactic arrangement, in an ordered relationship to one another.

² As with the clothes of Eligius of Noyon, in different stages of his life (*MGH*), *Scr rer Mer* 4, pp. 677-678, 681, c. 8-9, 12-15.

³ For a visible representation of syntagms of artefacts see Chenet G., "La tombe 319 du cimetière mérovingien de Lavoye (Meuse)," *Préhistoire* 4 (1935), pp. 34-118 and ibidem, figs 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 11.

⁴ At this point it is useful to remind the reader that as a system I accept any set of pieces, parts or details which cannot be used or worn at the same time on the same part of the body, and whose variation corresponds to a change in the meaning of the textile. This means that we are not dealing with a series of synonyms, but of words with almost the same form and function. In fact we can have all kinds of mental images of a model of, e.g., a coat.

In the case of chance finds, this kind of arrangement also applies, but it takes on a character of its own: here it is the technological information and the ideological and cultural aspects of it which can be analysed as a separate system. This is the case because, as we have seen, every technical choice, among all the possible ones in a society, transmits a cultural message. It is the conscious and subconscious factors, the needs of a society, that are here at work. The juxtaposition of artefacts that appear to represent certain values together with the objects that appear to have existed only for everyday use offer a parallel to the words that are used as the linguistic equivalents of real things. The first category usually appears in different textual contexts, in different genres from the second, for it is the first category, especially the textiles and accessories of the élites and the Church, that we encounter more often in narratives, poems, letters and wills. The second category of utilitarian objects appear in laws, in sermons, in capitularies, in polyptychs. Each category, encountered in different genres, addresses different layers of the population and has different material equivalents; so we can compare the silken braids and dalmatic from the relics of St Cuthbert⁵ to the fragments of woollen twill tabby on a bronze brooch.⁶ The cultural and the social categories can be signified thus, as I will try here to show. Nevertheless, among all cases of textile products, clothes in particular always carry more cultural connotations. This is because they dress a person who has a place, a role and a number of social identities. It is true that not all vestiges of the material record offer a view of the world of the people of the past and clear symbolic associations which directly reflects their cultural realities.⁷ Conversely, even the textile products that answered to everyday needs were constituent parts of a cultural system, embracing semiological, symbolic and economic values. This is based on the premise that, as just observed, each artefact was materialized as a result of a specific set of technical choices, out of all the possible ones in a society. In this sense,

⁵ Granger-Taylor H., "The weft-patterned silks and their braid: the remains of an Anglo-Saxon dalmatic of c.800 ?", in Bonner G. et alii (eds.), *Saint Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to AD 1200*, (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 303-327.

⁶ E.g. in Estagel; see Lantier R., "Le cimetière wisigothique d' Estagel: fouilles de 1935-36," *Gallia* 7 (1949), pp. 159-160. See for the term tabby in Appendix III.

⁷ Unless we understand technological aspects as part of the ideological rather than the symbolic constructions in a society (see above p. 30). By this I mean that it is not plausible to say that every product of technology which is found in a site or in a burial can be seen to have influenced or concealed or reflected the values of its social environment.

any product or and technique takes on the character of a system of values and ideologies. These are revealed when economic transactions involve the exchange of textile commodities, as well as any other kind of valuables. When gifts, and other types of exchange which mark relations of reciprocity, are valued for their function and workmanship, these latter also reveal the cultural and ideological evaluation of a level of technology.⁸

When it comes to the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious decisions and actions of the persons who used, combined and wore the textiles in the material record for their own reasons, we encounter the same problems as we had with the distinction between conscious and unconscious decisions to use a word given in the written evidence. When we look at the reuse of the materials, we can only speculate how conscious the artisan or a group of artisans were in their effort to replace parts, to rearrange or to mend an older textile artefact or heirloom. Perhaps they chose to encapsulate the technique, the aesthetic values and the ideology of their own times in their work; perhaps they chose to transmit or to preserve earlier fashions or vestimentary mores which had a specific cultural value related to distinct regional, ethnic and cultural identities. This latter would usually apply in the case of relics, for example. But it is still difficult to draw a clear line between the unconscious or conscious decisions that could have been dictated by necessity: e.g. to use one or another type of shrouding in the making of a funeral costume.

Nevertheless, here, for the above reasons, I will try to address what was chosen, consciously for the most part, in discourses about textiles and in their production and usage, that is the words that refer to textiles and textile objects, because even if one day it is ever possible to search into unconscious categories, it still will be very difficult to find an interpretative approach that would produce realistic and objective proofs of the results. I will try to organise the linguistic representations and archaeologically-attested textiles, and also vestimentary accessories made of leather or fabric, on the basis of syntagmatic units that belong to a vestimentary system of the early middle ages that reflects the

⁸ More on “gifts” especially in the cases of luxury goods, where some textiles can be inscribed as partial transactions that should be considered in the context of the entire transaction and its cultural values as the latter have been defined in anthropology - can be found in Kopytoff I., “The cultural biography of things : commodization as process”, in Appadurai A., *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*, (Cambridge, 1986), esp. pp. 68-69.

conscious choices and decisions - up to the point in which it is possible for us today to develop an interpretative approach.

My source-base will be the texts of various genres and the archaeological textiles from the burial archaeology, and preserved relics. The time span of the first type of source material differs from the second, because I will mostly use texts from the late 5th century to the late 10th century. The textiles and the accessories from the burial record derive from the period of the furnished burials in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England - and Lombard Italy for comparative purposes - from the late 5th to (in most cases) the middle of the 7th century, while the relics discussed here derive from the 4th to the 10th century.

Of course, as one would expect, the information about textiles and vestimentary systems from the early and the middle Anglo-Saxon period is based on the archaeology, and this creates a disparity between the Anglo-Saxon and the Frankish sources, which is made up for by the wealth of preserved Anglo-Saxon archaeological textiles in burial sites.

One of the problems in the use of the sources in reference to textiles is that in some genres in particular such as wills, hagiography, monastic rules and poetry, and works on the philosophy of language, such as the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, the descriptions of entire systems of clothes are fairly numerous and the information lends itself to analysis and comparisons. It is possible to assess from the other types of sources wider information about textiles, the ways these were worn and their social context when this was also available, but they were less eloquent about the systems and syntagms, and usually offered information on isolated parts of a textile system, the analysis and contextualisation of which is a lengthy process. For example, the vestimentary systems from the saints' lives form a corpus in itself, while the extraction of information from Gregory of Tours, its organisation on one axis about one element from a vestimentary system, and analysis of its uses and social contexts, requires a much more lengthy process of comparative analysis between one unit from the system and its use in later writers, etc.⁹

By contrast, in the archaeology of burial sites, the information on entire vestimentary systems is fragmentary, even if three or more layers of textile fragments

⁹ See Chapter 3, pp. 170-208.

were preserved on metallic accessories. The system is incomplete, and the information can only be assessed after a long process of contextualisation of the functions of the textile, the place on the body, the orientation of the metalwork accessories, etc. There is information nevertheless about cloth types, of a kind that can be qualified and quantified and compared with the existing corpora of textile types in North-west Europe.¹⁰ Another corpus of evidence which can be used in this study is epigraphical evidence from a small set of inscribed buckle-plate reliquaries from Burgundy, which offer very valuable personalised information about the artisans of textile accessories, and the gender and secular or ecclesiastical status of the owner and the artisan.¹¹ These were also a part of a system.

Relics constitute another category of information about dress systems; but in most of the cases used here only one part survives, in the form of preserved extant garments. Entire vestimentary systems are found only in the case of the late 7th- century relics of Chelles, belonging to Balthild and Bertille, and the information from these is here used to fill in missing information in the way of contrast and to compare with the different vestimentary systems that were reconstituted, in the course of this study, from the archaeology, as with the clothes of the woman with the Arnegundis ring at Saint-Denis and the woman under the choir of the cathedral in Cologne.¹²

Information about the production sites is scanty in both types of source material. The archaeology bears evidence to only a few rural types of textile production, while the cloth types from the burial sites attest to much more complex and sophisticated modes of production. The written sources of production are Frankish, almost in their entirety, and represent the part of textile production reality that is missing but is very difficult to visualise: mostly concern the *gynaecea* of ecclesiastical and royal sites of production, and there are only very few passing references in legislative texts to activities related to domestic production. For this reason, and also for reasons of space, a separate discussion of this evidence has been omitted from the thesis; I shall discuss it elsewhere in the near future.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3, 3.6 A note on archaeological method in reference to burial archaeology and dress accessories: metalwork and textile finds, pp. 233-241. Also see Appendix I and II.

¹¹ See Chapter 3, 3.10 Phylacteries, liminality and deviance, pp. 297-302.

¹² See Chapter 2, reconstruction of the dress of the Arnegundis individual, pp. 94-95, and of the lady under Cologne Cathedral, pp. 95-97.

2. 2 Towards a Taxonomy of Vestimentary Systems: the problem of the shifts in the meaning of textiles. Symbolic values.

Behind an interpretation of the shifts of meaning in words that directly refer to textile goods, we must seek the “total social phenomena”, and the “unconscious categories”, which conform to or structure the whole of society and its institutions; these, as Mauss wrote “are at once legal, economic, religious, aesthetic, morphological, and so on, they are legal in that they concern individual and collective rights, organised and diffuse morality; they might be entirely obligatory, or subject simply to praise and disapproval, political and domestic”. Similarly, “total social phenomena” are determinants in magic as in religion, law and linguistics because they “concern true religion, animism, magic and diffuse religious mentality”¹³ and are pregnant with meaning. These total social phenomena are present in both the representation of objects in the texts and the way the objects are made. Textiles in this sense are more than a set of signs of worldly order and disorder. They are, as most human-made things are, expressive of all the above notions of value, and because of this, a taxonomy of the cultural, economic and social values of these on the basis of the analysis of textiles and other clothing is attempted here. In a taxonomy like this, we are looking at the active forces that are expressed by and express these phenomena in a conscious way, that is both deliberate and crystallised, or else in an unconscious one, as in the case when these active forces in the use of the textiles are understood as “habitus”.¹⁴ Active social forces are at work when there is a phase, in the use of a clothing system, when shifts of meaning in words happen for reasons of the personal choice of the author at “random”, and thus remain forever elusive, both to contemporaries of the author and to us. It is not only in the archaeology (in the case of

¹³ Mauss M., *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Cunnison I., (London, 1954), pp. 76-81, esp. chapt. 3 on “Sociological and ethical conclusions.”

¹⁴ Bourdieu P., *Outline of a Theory of Practice.*, (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 5, 15, passim, pp. 70- 93, esp. on cultural and social structures related to habitus and practices, and 125-127, on the meanings of weaving.

“rituals”) that these unconscious categories are at work, but also in all other forms of documentation of textiles.

When a given word appears closely associated with some system of belief or some form - or function – that is a part of social organisation, it is legitimate to ask ourselves the same question again as we did previously: what does it mean? And when this word corresponds to variations of representations and shifts in their meaning, it seems just as legitimate to ask: under what social circumstances does it – the word, the artefact - change its meaning? It is through detecting social change and the new dictates of social necessities, the new material and the new socio- political circumstances and new exchange systems, that we can venture to explain these shifts in meaning.

Before answering these questions we must accept the fact that no matter how sophisticated an approach we develop, we have to attempt to translate into our own language rules originally conceived in another language.¹⁵ Because even when we think that we have a clear grasp of a range of semiological connotations of one textile item or of a whole system, we have to try to penetrate into cultural systems that were transmitted in forms of the Latin language no longer spoken in the same and unified way, and also in the Anglo-Saxon language, during a period of 400-500 years, during which it is impossible to demarcate the limits and extents between the translation of cultures. This range of language covered a terrifying spectrum of vernacular variants of Romance and Germanic languages, and cultural environments with their own value systems. So, even though we may manage the translation of texts, we have to admit defeat beforehand with respect to any translation of cultures. However, it is at least true that many of the texts discussing textiles were written and circulated in a form of Latin that was understood in a specific socio-linguistic environment, as for example, the Latin of 9th-century Francia, after the effort of the Carolingian scholars to ameliorate and “cleanse” it. The changes in the forms and the meaning of textile words, as in this example of intervention in historical grammar, offer very interesting grounds for comparison between different meanings, forms and uses of textiles, when compared with earlier ones.¹⁶

¹⁵ Lévi-Strauss C.L., *Anthropologie Structurale*, (Paris, 1958), chapt. XVII, Placement de l’ anthropologie dans les sciences sociales et problèmes, pp. 62-63.

¹⁶ See the examination on a time-line of the history of the words pertaining to two important vestimentary signifiers as discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 120-134, and Chapter 3, pp.186-220.

Conversely, if we accept that an object, in the framework of a “total social phenomenon”, also represents something else in the eyes of someone, in the sense that it stands for what it is and additionally stands for number of other values, what do the remains of a shroud, the actual relic of a shroud, a patchwork of an altarcloth, or an elaborately woven hooded cloak stand for, and for whom? And, most important, who are these people or these social groups who see the validity of their cultural systems and categories reflected in these textile objects? How close can we come to understanding what they mean when they include textiles in the written representations of their world, and what do they want from a textile?

The symbolic value of a textile can evidently be expressed in words. The words used to describe textiles express the sense of social inclusion or exclusion, or are symbols of protection, or have an apotropaic function, as in the cases when the clothing of the living is mentioned in contrast to the clothing of the dead, the clothing of the free to the clothing of captives, etc.¹⁷ These dialectics of the dressed, and also of the naked, are found at the heart of funerary rituals, in liturgy, and in other social events that have a special meaning to a community and provoke a course of action. A careful analysis is needed here, embedded in the taxonomy of possible social values found in these vestimentary systems. It is always a social language that is expressed, formed first from the “imaginaire”, that is both the linguistic and also the stereotypical counterpart of the artefact in public consciousness. This language is the model that is used to formulate the information transmitted by the garment in written form; and also the real garment that could correspond to surviving versions of woven and tailored textile objects. As these three structures, the linguistic, the conceptual and the material form of an artefact, discussed above, are at work simultaneously, social values can simultaneously be in interaction at a cognitive or a less cohesive or an “unconscious” level.¹⁸ We will try to

¹⁷ According to P. Fouracre, *op.cit.*, p. 6, Chapter 1, note 81 “A semiological approach is more usually associated with much better known areas of writing in which one can be more certain about the metaphorical use of language. In particular deconstruction rests upon identifying possible exclusions of meaning. Exclusions are indeed visible in these texts where authors focus on a metaphorical opposition between heavenly and earthly experiences”.

¹⁸ See Chapter 1, section 1.2, pp. 20-28, section 1.3, pp. 28-29.

address these value systems, as “total” social phenomena happening at a specific instance in time, place and social space, throughout the thesis.

Words, pregnant with meaning, are also at work in the conscious and unconscious cultural categories which have specific functions in the organisation of information in a narrative. For example, in a standard narrative form of the early middle ages, hagiographical texts, it is a commonplace that a *sudarium*¹⁹ of a saint has an association with the original shroud of Christ as found in the Vulgate, whose *imago Christi* the saint was during his lifetime. This can be implicit as in e.g. the *Life of St Corbinianus*;²⁰ or else the parallel can hint at a *typus*, in the terminology of Hrabanus Maurus,²¹ for the series of events or theological or biblical references or other symbols which, put in a certain sequence, evoke that parallel.

It is important to stress here that these systems addressed different secular and religious environments capable of comprehending the symbols, in different ways which, in any given time and cultural context, would be able to convey both the use and the symbolic meaning of a word or an object, or would invest a meaning of their own, perhaps responding to the conscious and unconscious symbolism used by the author. This would relate to different levels of the functional literacy of observers, and their education, and in general their ability to encode and decode their own representations. For example, it requires a high level of literacy for someone to be able to grasp the gist of a text in its entirety, and also to be able to discern whether the description and characterisation of events, as outlined by an author at the beginning of a text, is consistent with their actual portrayal in the action of the story and in the final outcome. The same applies to the

¹⁹ As is found in “*linleo sudatus*” in *Vita Pardulfi*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 6, p. 28, 10 and also in Gregorius. Magn., *Epp.* 4, 30, (MGH) *Epp* 1, 2, p. 266, 14, also in idem, *Homiliarum Liber secundus*, XXXII PL 76, p. 176, “*Sudarium and linteamina*”. *Sudarium* is used in the *Itinerarium* of the 6th-century writer Antoninus Placentinus, CSEL 39, p. 168.

²⁰ See the miracle in the traslation of the incorrupt body of St Corbinianus, when warm blood is flowing from his nostrils, once the part of his shroud covering his face is uncovered. In this instance, typical in hagiography, his body fulfills the promise of the resurrection in flesh following the example of Christ. *Sudarium* is key object and link to the reference in Christ. See Arbeo of Freising, *Vita Corbiniani Episcopi Baiuvariorum*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 6, p. 589, 20, c. 38 : “*Litteras a Papiense summo pervenerunt regi, qui tanti viri corpus praecipiebantur cum summa honore suscepi. Eo suscepto, vasculum aperuerunt, ut experimento dediceret veritatis probamentum. Cumque pallium sudarii abstraxisset, cum quo facies illius fuerat velata ecce! Sanguis ex naribus viri Dei egrediebatur calidus, qui inter tot montium spatia fuerat contactus, et tante pulchritudinis forma et corporis color, quantam prius gestabatur vivus...*”.

²¹ Hrabanus Maurus, *Homilies*, XVI, 6, Migne P., (ed.), PL 107, 10.

understanding by the audience of differences in the semiology of a belt, a girdle, a veil, a weaving tool.

2.3 Meaning of Vestimentary Systems and production and consumption patterns of textiles.

To sum up to this point: I have been exploring the relationship between different categories and also between different systems in two types of source material: written sources and archaeology. It should be admitted that in the written record a textile object can be represented explicitly, as a vehicle of cultural values which are only implicitly present in a material item. It is quite plausible however that even in the material record a given find can also be understood in association with another non-tangible and physical entity, the conceptual model for the found item, and this, along with the linguistic form of the representation of the textile, can be invested with certain symbolic functions. When it comes to the artefact, however, the technique of its production can often be traced but its meaning usually remains a matter of cultural speculation. The symbolic function of a material object is clearer when we can regard the object as being part of a ritual, whether secular, religious, or, if the last two can be distinguished, magical.

In this case the object may have been the specific vehicle of the cultural values of a given social group in a given locality and a given place and time. We sometimes know this because, in the case of objects represented and real, especially when it comes to textiles, leather, and also to an extent jewellery and other metalwork related to clothing, we have a documented cultural meaning in - sometimes contemporary - written sources. This would however lead to another question: how does the imaginary reality of the written record reflect or distort the values of the ruling classes, of specific ethnic groups, of local customs, of gender in their documented representation through the cultural meaning of textile objects? These are questions which are normally very hard to answer, and it shows that there are always limitations when we come to discuss realities.

There is always the further restriction that we can assess the cultural meaning of consumption and production, but it is impossible to assess the scale or intensification of

production in the written record unless we come across a (usually sporadic, and locally restricted and temporarily specific) citation in, for example, a private document in a cartulary of a monastic house with a reference to textiles, which would be too anecdotal to serve to form generalisations and produce results. This does not apply to the archaeology, however. In the case of textiles, often against all odds given a poor archaeological preservation record, it is possible to ascertain from the growing number of preserved finds, mostly deriving from closed mortuary assemblages, a number of the most probable exact varieties of cloth and the level of technology in a locality, and to locate the imports that perhaps would complement the textual evidence of real production at a site.²²

Another question that cannot be fully addressed here is how the change in the use of any given word reflects changes in the usage of a garment in reality. It is almost impossible to trace and compare changes of that sort - as difficult as trying to detect changes in moral and political norms from the information from the “barbarian” law codes - because of the lack of evidence to back up with what is already known about the testimony of the speakers themselves and their involvement in linguistic change. Still, we can sometimes establish a diachronic and broader scope in the development of the language, even if based on incomplete accounts of objects we have never seen, and on the very particular views of individual writers. We shall try this here through the presentation of the lexis of chosen textile objects which have a meaningful relationship to the vestimentary system, and which can offer us insights on how vestimentary systems work across a wide time span.

When looking for a relationship between the material and the textual evidence, which could go beyond a schematic array of different sorts of evidence and which somewhere might offer a few comparisons, we will have first to accept some facts about the quality and the quantity of these bodies of evidence.

As the richness and even the quantity of the textual representations cannot be matched with the material record, it is only possible to set out a small number of

²² For a number of systematic studies on archaeological textiles of the early middle ages: for Francia Bender-Jørgensen L., *North European Textiles until AD 1000*, (Aarhus, 1992), and for Anglo-Saxon England, Walton-Rogers P., *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England*, (York, 2007), and Owen-Crocker G., *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2003).

surviving fragments of archaeological textiles, and extant garments in very few cases; still, these can be organised in a taxonomy, or in systems and syntagms of items of clothing, other kinds of accessories, cloth from the mortuary record, and tools and weaving implements. Even when we know what sites produced them, this only serves to highlight the fact that they came into existence thanks to a number of diverse technical choices and a trade and exchange network. All the same, whatever its limitations, it is only when we attempt to assert the existence of some relationship between the material and the textual evidence that we can approach the problematics of meaning, as I mentioned above. This relationship is based on the cultural information which is shared by both types of empirical source material used here.²³

There is some evidence from series of artefacts which can give a statistical view of the types of cloth and of production based on the samples that survive. We can accept as a rule that the documentary record can provide us with a diachronic view of a given historical reality and that the material record can usually give glimpses of a synchronic view of a given settlement or cemetery. All the same, the material record is much more diversified than that. We do have different strata on a site, if we are lucky with the conditions of excavation, and also with the decisions about the methodology of the dig. Conversely, language changes also occur, and these can be observed especially within certain socio-linguistic contexts through a given span of years. It is true, though, that a single textile fragment, even when found in stratified contexts, cannot support a case study.²⁴ In the case, however, where the textual evidence offers technical parallels, or where it is unique and points at specific practices recognised in the archaeology, it can be used simultaneously to exemplify the presentation of the archaeology, to point and highlight the common aspects, before we reach the point of comparative analysis.

How can a theory of meaning of artefacts, especially textiles, and a taxonomy of vestimentary systems, enlighten us in regard to these problems? How close

²³ See above pp. 16, 20-22, 62-64 on the common platform and the common vocabulary required for the interpretation of cultural information, and its correlations with the empirical world which constitute the problematics of meaning.

²⁴ For these reasons, and others that will be given shortly, the examination of the written sources and of the archaeology in this thesis will be mostly separate, before any comparative analysis is attempted, given that the changes and the functions of the empirical evidence are so divergent.

are we to tracing the meaning of these systems and the production and consumption patterns in the early middle ages? There are so many questions in these last pages that one might despair of being able to answer any of them, and many of them certainly cannot be answered with the evidence currently at our disposal. All the same, I argue that there are some questions that are still possible to ask, where we can also get some answers. Can we deduce from the written sources how conscious their authors were of the symbolic values embedded in textiles? Yes, it is possible, as we have briefly seen above in the example of Columbanus mantle and the baldrics and belts of Gerald; even if it is impossible to trace the social change and impossible to trace patterns of production in the textual record in any detail. Can change on a technical level be detected in the written sources, as it can in the material record? No, because the writers, when it comes to textiles, are not very descriptive, unless they are interested in giving some technical detail, which usually still adds little to the picture. What is plausible to expect, on the other hand, are descriptive terms - especially adjectives - that give information on general appearance, materials and pigmentation; and this type of information has cultural value.²⁵ We can also detect changes in the meaning of the same word from one locality to another, one genre of texts to another, one writer to another.²⁶

²⁵ See in Chapter 2, pp. 124-125 and pp. 127-128 for tablet-woven braids, in Angilbert and in Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the example of St Radegund in Appendix III, Vol II, note 31, text in relevance to the information about dyes, in *Textile Terms and Procedures*, for the example of the *vestis sigillata* of Saint Radegund.

²⁶ See Chapter 2, pp. 69-70 and 80-81, the different terms employed in parts of the Christian world to denote the Benedictine monk's cowl, according to Paul the Deacon, and Chapter 3, pp. 185-190 for semiological adventures of the word *bracile*.

2.4 Paradigms of systems

I will now identify and classify clothing systems according to the function and type of the artefact, analyse their parts, and establish correlations between them. This analysis will compare words describing textile artefacts, both in isolation and organised in syntagmatic units.

A system of external liturgical garments would take the form of a list of words such as *Scapulum*, *Superpellicium*, *Palta*, *Planeta*, etc;²⁷ in the case of textiles made for the sole purpose of mortuary use – that is, shrouds – the list of words would include words such as *Sindon*, *Linteamen*, *Paramentum*, *Chrismalis*.²⁸ Special care should be taken that the words that are constituents of a garment system – as in any other system – are synchronic. For example it is feasible to reconstitute the analytical category of a monk's headgear current in the 9th century only once we combine secure intersecting and overlapping uses of each word in well-dated documents. When we do this, the words *Armilausa*, *Byrrus*, *Cuculla* and *Melote* all crop up in that period mentioned above, as well as before and after.²⁹ The term *cucullarius* in the 10th century, is used metonymically as the synonym of the monk, of any order.³⁰

²⁷ See Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v. for more on these terms, usually encountered in contexts of lists of liturgical vestments.

²⁸ See *ibidem*.

²⁹ *Armilausa* takes on the meaning of a corslet in Isid. *Etym. Lib.* 19, l. 22.28 (Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive originum Libri XX*, (annotated edition Lindsay, W.M.), t. II, Oxford Classical Texts, Lib. XIX, *De Navibus, Aedificiis et Vestibus*. See also in *Liber Pontificalis, Gregorius II*, tom. I, c. 91, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, Duchesne L., (ed.), [2nd edition] (Paris, 1955), p. 408, “*Rex quae fuerat indutus exueret...mantum, armilausiam, balteum*”.

This is found to mean a monk's cowl by the middle of the 9th century: “*Dedissee se fratribus S. Martini, Antoniacum villam ad eorum armelausas*”, *Diplomata Charles II (le Chauve)*, n° 113, Tôme III, Tessier G., (ed.), (Paris, 1955), (a. 849), see Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v. *Byrrus* is a classical Greek word in use in Isidorus with both a vernacular and ecclesiastical sense (See note 29, current until the 10th century in an obsolete manner as a linguistic fossil meaning a form of coat. *Melote* covers the span from the late 5th century Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi*, Lib. 2, Lib 2, Migne P., (ed.), PL 103, c. 7, 225, and in the mid 7th century in Isid. *Etym. Lib.* 19. c. 24. 19, “*Melotes, quae etiam pera vocantur, pellis est caprina [a] collo pendens praecincta usque ad lumbos: est autem habitus proprie necessarius ad operas exercitium*” and it appears also in *Vita Fructuosi Bracarenensis*, ASOB II, p. 582 in the late 7th century: “*Contigit enim, ut dum quodam tempore in cujusdam rupis gradibus melotem ex capreis pellibus indutus enixius oraret, ...*”. In Theodemar of Monte Casino (late 8th century) (see note 31) the use takes a very local tone. Also it appears in Fructuosus of Braga, *Regula monachorum*, c. IV, *De habitu et veste monachorum*, Migne P., (ed.), PL 87, col. 1101C.D written in the late 7th century. In the early 11th century it is used to signify pilgrimage: “*Indutus melotis quasi*

Nevertheless, some of these words might be nothing but an obsolete reminiscence of late Classical Latin authors found in the glosses and in narrative sources used in liturgy and education, that were still in use and were copied for a number of cultural reasons that we cannot analyse here. A possible illustration of the synchronic sense and internal function of a system is given in the following example:

That garment which is called by the monks in Gaul, *cuculla*, we call it *cappa*, because this is the garment properly designated to monks, and we shall call it *melote*, in the way that from then and onwards it is called by some in this province

It is from Theodemar of Monte Cassino, cited from a letter written between 787 and 797.³¹ In this, it is clear that the contemporary observer and a possible consumer of the object had in mind what the associative relationship of the parts of the system of hoods could be and also that it might have combinative constraints, thanks to local idioms and customs. The *melote* is quoted in this text from Gregory the Great, of the late 5th century and also appears in a similar text, in a letter of Paul the Deacon who discusses exactly the same things as Theodemar, at the end of the 8th century.³² The definitions, description, use, materials and place in the system of the monk's headgear remain the same as the intertextual evidence shows, although there is no way we can tell if the same item was in reality used across three centuries.

I am also going to analyse the syntagmatic units that occur in the sources, and to attempt reconstructions using criteria of contextuality of similar objects in a single region

peregrinus" meaning a hood here: *Chron. Reinhardsbrunnensis brevis, dioec. Mainz* (a. 1034), Holder-Egger O., (ed.), (*MGH*) *SS* 30, Suppl. Tom. 16-25, p. 518, 1, 33.

Cuculla appears as a monk's cowl and it is in that use to be found in the middle of the 7th c. in Isid, *Etym.* Lib 19, c. 24.17, (see note 29).

³⁰ The *cuculla* and *cucullus* and its derivative *cucullarius* is still used in the same sense in the early 10th century "Ego itaque subdiaconus cucullariorum S. Galli novissimus scripsi", Wartmann H., (ed.), *Urkundenbuch S. Gallen*, (Zurich, 1863), vol. II, n° 722, (a. 902).

³¹ Theodemar of Monte Casino, *Epist.* 2 (a. 787-797), (*MGH*) *Epp* 4, p. 512, "Illud vestimentum quod a Gallicanis monachis cuculla dicitur, nos cappam vocamus, quod proprie monachorum designat habitum, melotem appellare debemus, sicut et actenus in hac provincia a quibusdam vocatur. De quo, sicut beatus Gregorius scribit in libro *Dialogi*, ereptus ab aqua per Maurum monachum puer Placidus dixit 'Ego cum ab aqua abstraherem, melotem super me abbatis cernebam, eumque me ab aquis educere considerabam'. Quod tegumentum ideo sic appellatum est, quia solebat antiquitus de illius animantis pelle fieri, quod melos propter rotunditatem sui corporis appellatur". The source this passage refers to is Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi*, Lib. 2, Lib 2, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 103, c. 7, 225.

³² Paul the Deacon, *Operum Pars tertia, Epistolae et carmina, Epistolae* 1, *PL* 95, col. 1588A.

and period, functional properties of the garment or accessory, and its most likely dimensions.³³ Thus for example I can reconstitute the apparel of a certain social category, of people who function as officials in public roles who can be identified in descriptions that associate the garment syntagm with a kind of belt called a *Cingulum*, or a *Balteum* (and not a *Zona* or a *Strophium*, meant for women as we will see in the course of the examination of our written sources in Chapter 3 which are usually interpreted as a girdle).³⁴ Note that the term *balteum* also occurs in cases of magic for both men and women, as in Caesarius of Arles' sermon about the utility of a *balteum* of woven threads for magical medicine, probably for both men and women.³⁵ In other instances, however, the same word *balteum* is used in a public ritual in a law court or in a palace to denote the specific type of belt of a count.³⁶ Syntagmatic units appear in their entirety quite often in the sources. Their advantage is that we can reconstitute the whole ensemble from the part, and vice versa, if we have a well dated and synchronic concordance of the same type of apparel or of a social category. They also present the advantage that in most cases the terms testify to their contemporary use in association with one another. This offers the possibility of the use of a syntagm as a guide to a diachronic view of parallel syntagms recurrent in other social categories, and as a guide to how social groups use the same or different textile commodities. This can be especially useful when we try to reconstruct a vestimentary system from parallel systems in the archaeology of burial sites. In the written sources, this can also show how differences can be attributed to a difference in the genre of texts or an author.

Apart from historical, regional and status differences that can be approached through the dialectics of social codes, gender can be also approached through the different ways women and men used garments and the different ways these were

³³ Again, I have to remind the reader that I accept as a syntagm the juxtaposition in the same system of dress or furnishings (or of altarcloths covering an altar, or the group of house furnishings such as upholstery, tapestry, hangings) of different elements.

³⁴ See Chapter 3, for *zona*: pp. 171, 179, 182-184, 190, 197, 199 ; for *strophium*: p. 184.

³⁵ Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons au peuple*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 243, t. II, Sermo 52, pp. 25-30.

³⁶ Liutprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, (MGH) SSRG 4, Becker, J., (ed.), (Hannover and Leipzig, 1915), 12, II, 62: "*Boso mirae longitudinis et latitudinis aureum habebat balteum qui multarum et pretiosarum splendebat nitore gemmarum.*"...Boso had a belt of exceptional length and breadth, enriched with with a large number of precious gleaming stones. (*Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana. Liutprand of Cremona*, Scott B., (ed. and trans.), Bristol Classical Press, (London, 1993).

documented. For example, one can put together Queen Radegundis' apparel³⁷ and that of Saint Gertrude³⁸ (female members of the aristocracy) with the evidence about lepers' men's clothes in the *Life of Saint Arnulf*,³⁹ to see the shifts of meaning of the generic term *vestimentum*. *Victus seu vestimentum* becomes a formulaic phrase to be found in wills, donation and charters alike.⁴⁰ The latter is an inclusive word that normally has no other qualifier; but perhaps its context caused shifts in its meaning. Words used as signs and indicators of meaning, found in isolation, can also sometimes be organized and analysed in systems, if they can be juxtaposed with the syntagmatic units found in other sources. This is possible as long as we have comparative evidence that is well dated, and that comes from more than one source from the same broad period.

On the whole, the most articulated systems in the sources, out of all the things they describe, were garment systems. Most prominent were the syntagms of accessories, such as belts and girdles, clothes for men and women in general, women's headcoverings, and liturgical clothes as set out by authors who were eager to ensure that the proper term – and “proper” meant the term with the closest Biblical affiliation – would go with the proper class of church dignitaries and that it was worn at the right moment in a ritual. We will see later on in Chapter 2, in the paradigm set out for veils, as set within the framework of the clothes they were worn with, where and why the lexis of the textile artefact shifted, or where and why it was used interchangeably with a close synonym across our period. In Chapter 3 the same will be done for belts and girdles, which were the key elements in the vestimentary system for the majority of social groups in the early middle ages, so that on the basis of a study of them we can get further towards understanding how clothes as a whole were worn. These will be the focusses of this thesis, the key examples that I base my empirical arguments on. Conversely, ornaments,

³⁷ Evidence for this is found in several instances. See Fortunatus Venantius, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, 1, 13, 26, 5f p. 369, and ibidem, 2, 1, 6, 5f, p. 368.

³⁸ *Vita S. Geretrudis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Merov* 2, pp. 461-462.

³⁹ “*Temporibus denique Dagoberti regis cum in palacio esset, eidem quidam leprosus clamare coepit, victum seu etiam vestimentum deposcens.*” *Vita Arnulfi*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* II, c. 11, 9, p. 436.

⁴⁰ In place of the *victus seu vestimentum*, can be *victus et vestitus*, usually in royal Diplomas where rulers endow ecclesiastical establishments, as in the following Formulary: “...*per nostrum et fidelium nostrorum favorem defensando, ut servi Dei, qui ibidem congregator, victus et vestitus abundanter potentes, die noctuque Dei laudibus et precibus pro nobis et pro omni populo christiano ex tempore in tempus insistere sufficient*”, *Additamenta*, (MGH) *Formulae Merovingici et Karolini Aevi*, Zeumer K., (ed.), (Hannover, 1886), c. 4, p. 399.

jewellery and house furnishings, although representing power and status, and instrumental in descriptive accounts of political dignitaries, formed systems of their own that were less helpful in enlightening us about textiles and the ways these were worn by early medieval people, so they were not included in this study. But I hope all the same that a concentration on the head and the waist will be enough to establish the basic points about early medieval clothing that I wish to argue in this thesis. Unfortunately, there is no space for other examples.

B. *Pars pro toto*: Two words extracted from a garment system.

An exemplification of womens' headwear : Linguistic, historical and archaeological perspectives.

The uses and the meaning of a part of the early medieval dress system will be discussed here in order to demonstrate the ways the linguistic, conceptual and non-verbal systems of dress work and interact. I will test the importance of women's headwear against evidence derived from different disciplines, and contextualize it with the information in the written sources and the archaeology to see if a single significant part of a dress system can enhance our insights of the whole. This is important, because the surviving evidence of early medieval dress is usually fragmentary and there is a growing need for a method that would inform us about the forms, the function and the usages of dress in its entirety. Headwear is a very characteristic part of women's dress and here I will explore how its linguistic descriptions within a specific historical framework correspond to the morphology of the artefacts in the material record when these are viewed as a source of pivotal information about the entire dress system. Early medieval headwear comes in a multiplicity of forms from various contexts and perhaps can point out the links between the signification of social space, cultural codes and styles in the written sources and the practices, attitudes and elements of regional and personal identities as revealed in the archaeology.

A whole garment system can be described at times in our sources, every item being enumerated to suit the needs of a text. So in the 6th-century Rule of S. Benedict⁴¹ there is a full and precise account of the clothing appropriate for a monk: a cowl, tunic, belt, handkerchief, sandals and shoes, all given by the abbot to the monk in exchange for his other worldly possessions. The text underlines why the vestimentary system of the Benedictine monk is given out in detail: all needs will be provided for, and any addition, or difference in attire denotes private ownership and thus constitutes a serious breach of faith in the community:

...If any brother be found to have anything that he has not received from the abbot, let him undergo the strictest punishment. And in order that this evil of private ownership may be rooted out utterly, let the abbot provide all things that are necessary: that is cowl, tunic, stockings, shoes, belt, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, and tablets; so that all pretext of need may be taken away.⁴²

A very different treatment of a garment system is found in a narrative by Fortunatus.⁴³ St Radegund offers on the altar her luxurious clothing and accessories, shirts, sleeves, veil, girdle and jewellery:

⁴¹ Benedictus of Nursia, *Regula monachorum*, *La Règle de S. Benoît*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 185 III, Neufville J. (ed.), de Vogüé A. (trans.), *Sources Chrétiennes* 181-186a, Textes monastiques d' Occident 38, (Paris, 1971), cap. LV, and for an analysis and comparison with the earlier Rule of the Master and its influence on the Rule of Benedict, See "La Désappropriation: Vêtement et chaussure. (vii, iii)", in ibidem, pp. 917-920, where minute care is taken in both Rules to describe what is appropriate according to the climate of any region where a benedictine monastery is situated and to the seasons of the year. The earlier Rule of the Master is more specific e.g. uses *braca* instead of *femoralia* and mentions four elements in the same chapter 55: *braca, tunica, cuculla, pallium* instead of *cuculla et tunica* as in Benedict's Rule. The words in this example from chapter 55 of the Rule of Benedict describe the clothes used in the seasons: "*Sufficit enim monaco duas tunicas et duas cucullas habere propter noctes et propter lavare ipsas res: jam quod supra fuerit, superfluum est, amputari debet. Et pedules, et quodcumque est vetere, reddant dum accipiunt novum. Femoralia hi qui in via diriguntur de vestiario accipiant, que revertentes lota ibi restituant.*"

...For it is sufficient if a monk have two tunics and two cowls, to allow for a change at night and for the washing of these garments; more than that is superfluity and should be curtailed. And let them return their leggings, and anything else that it is old, when they receive new ones. (trans. based on Farmer D.H., (ed. and trans.), *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, Oxford, Bodleian, Hatton 48, (Copenhagen, 1968), pp. 124-125).

⁴² Benedictus de Nursia, op. cit., note 41, cap. XV, pp. 908, 914-915: "*Et si cui inventum fuerit quod ab abbate non accepit, gravissimae disciplinae subiaceat. Et ut hoc vitium peculiaris radicitus amputetur, dentur ab abbate omnia quae sunt neccesaria: id est, cuculla, tunica, pedules, caligae, brabile, cultellus, graphium, acus, mappula, tabulae, ut omnis auferatur necessitates excusatio*", (Text trans. based on Farmer D.H., (ed. and trans.), *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, Oxford, Bodleian, Hatton 48, (Copenhagen, 1968), pp. 126-127.

⁴³ Fortunatus Venantius, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, 1, 13, 26 5f, p. 369. "*Similiter accedens ad cellam Sancti lumeris die uno, quo se ornatat felix regina, composito, sermone et loquar barbaro, stapione, camisas, manicas, cofias, fibulas, cuncta auro, quaedam gemmis exornata per circulum,*

...Similarly, she approached the cell of Saint Iumeris one day, the blessed Queen when she gladly adorned herself as a Queen, she addressed him with future benefit to herself, wearing what I shall call a barbarian headdress, she transferred to the holy altar her linen shirts, sleeves,⁴⁴ coifs and brooches, all of them decorated with gold and some with jewels which encircled her head as a crown. Then, on a day when she had to be adorned with particularly worldly distinction, with whatever a wealthy woman could wear, she proceeded to the cell of the holy man Daddo but after rewarding the abbot, she gave it all to the monastery.

The description of the clothing system of the Queen and the procedure of giving it up is a strong visual statement used by the author to enhance the dramatic effect of the conversion into a deaconess, a solution she found suitable to her circumstances. It seems that Radegund managed to compromise and choreograph her shift to a semi-sacerdotal role without a complete renunciation of her former social responsibilities. Here the description of the elements progresses from what is worn nearer to the body to the outer garments and the accessories. Notably, the sequence of the nouns denotes the general impression of dress rather than the associative relationships between the elements. Words such as *manica* merit our attention: this separate element can mean either gauntlets or sleeves, probably detachable. In both cases, this element belonged to court ceremonial dress, probably recognised by the poets' contemporaries, although sadly the poet leaves us in the dark as to the detail. This treatment of dress can be compared to another description in Agnellus of Ravenna in the *Liber Pontificalis* for the church of Ravenna, written in the middle of the 9th century.⁴⁵ There, the garments of well-dressed women, participants in a penitential procession, are given in full detail:

sibi profutura sancto tradit altario Inde procedens ad cellam venerabilis Datdonis die qua debuit ornari praestanter in saeculo quidquid indui poterat censu divite femina, abbate remunerato, totum dedit coenubio". (Text based on trans. Petersen J.M., (ed. and trans.), in *Handmaids of the Lord. Contemporary descriptions of female asceticism in the first six Christian centuries*, Cistersian Studies Series 143, (Kalamazoo, 1996), pp. 380-397).

⁴⁴ These sleeves can be translated both as something detachable or as gloves, nevertheless in both cases the rare uses of the word *manicas* underlines the ceremonial form of the attire of the queen. (see trans. note 43).

⁴⁵ Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, (MGH) *Scr. Rer Langob et ital saec VI- IX*, pp. 362-363. "*Matronae, depositis vestibibus iocundatis, logubrae indutae sunt vestes. Omnes decalvabant vertex suas et cutem nudabat. Speciositas virginum sublata est; omnes decanabant vertex et cutem nudabat abstulerunt a se mutatorias vestes et pallia proieceruntque, a se in aures et anulos et dextralia et pereselidas, et munilia et olfactoria, et acus et specula, et lunulas et liliola praesina et laudosias et omnia iocunda et cuncupiscibilia proiecti, carmen lamentationis indutae sunt*".

...The matrons with their pleasant clothing laid by, wore the garments of grief. All cropped their hair and bared their skin. The beauty of the virgins was removed, all of them cropped their heads and bared their skin, they took off their freshly-changed garments and their cloaks and cast away from them earrings, and rings and bracelets and chains worn around the knees, and necklaces and perfumed pendants, and the pins and the mirrors and crescent-shaped pendants and chains with emerald ornaments and *laudosas*,⁴⁶ and all the pleasant and desirable things cast away, they were clothed in a song of lamentation.⁴⁷

There is an exaggerated and clichéd stylisation here in this extract that marks it out from the two previous ones. The descriptions in all three cases characterise garments, shoes and headgear, combining detail where it serves a purpose, and highlighting, not each and every item, but the ones deemed as the most important. The functions of the description of the garment systems in all three examples are however different. In the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, one of the first rules of monastic life, written around 530, the stress is on the uniformity of the attire and its utilitarian and austere nature. The first item to be described is the badge of the monastic calling, the *cuculla*, that needs to be immediately discernible to all, followed by the tunic and leggings, that cover up and are in contact with the body. In the later example of the *Life of Saint Radegund*, written in 587, the description of the system progresses from the clothes closer to the body to the accessories. The emphasis here is laid on the luxury of the fabrics, the intricate cut, form and function - detachable sleeves or gauntlets - and possibly more than one coif worn at a time - the multitude and quality of the bejewelled accessories. All these are considered seemly and available to royalty, and this works as a subtle message so as to denote the badge of office and the rank of a Queen who is to remain active under the guise of a female deacon, and definitely not to remain an obscure nun. Was this her everyday attire? The royal costume? A bridal costume? The clashing of roles and the clashing of purposes expressed in the description of the clothes worn, rejected and offered, brings us new

⁴⁶ Text translation based on *Agnelli Ravennatis Liber Pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, Mauskopf Deliyannis D., (ed. and trans.), (Turnhout, 2006), p. 251. According to Holder-Egger, the editor of the *MGH* text, *pereselidas* can be a form of *periscelidas* (leggings, stockings), (found also in Isidorus of Seville, Etym. XIX, 31, 19), p. 362, n. 1.4 and *laudosas* could be corruption of *sandalias*, p. 363, n. 1. b. I do not see any linguistic justification to this second claim. The word is too corrupt to facilitate any further investigation.

⁴⁷ *Isaiah* 3:17-24.

problems. Was that everyday Frankish elite dress or a costume with a specific function? If we extract the most characteristic part, that is the headwear, as in the case of the cowl for the monastic dress, can we reach any conclusions?

In the much later Ravenna example, written around 846 and describing a penitential procession that is supposed to have taken place in c. 708, the description starts from the head and the fact that it is bared and exposed, the hair ruined, and seen without covering and headdress or ornaments. The drama in this picture is accentuated in a gradual description of the most affected and vulnerable segments of Ravennate society. The narrative is stressed in biblical undertones at two levels: in the semantics of the event described and by the way of its aesthetic effect. On the first level, that is in the treatment of a fortuitous event afflicting a section of this society,⁴⁸ the dress ritual plays the role of the sacrifice so as to avert divine punishment for all, a biblical *topos*; and second, in an analogy drawn from Isaiah,⁴⁹ the mourning sounds are represented as engulfing like wrappings the women who are enacting the ritual. The clothes described first are the elements that are in immediate contact with the person, and then follows a long list of varieties of jewellery, to stress emphatically all the beauty and wealth cast away and concealed in extreme penitence. What is here cast away and mutated - as also possibly in the case of Radegund - is not only the signifier of their class, or a badge of office, or of a calling as in the cowl in the Rule.⁵⁰ In this case the focus is both on what the specific objects of the costume of the rich women of Ravenna would be, and also on

⁴⁸ The reason for this procession is the trouble that began when two opposing fractions of the towns residing near two specific Gates in Ravenna, supposedly killed a number of their opponents and hid away the corpses of their victims.

⁴⁹ See note 47.

⁵⁰ In the *Rule of Benedict*, and the earlier *Rule of the Master* (See note 41, 42, Cap. LV, p. 508 and 917-920) the *Rule of Saint Basil*, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 103, reg. 11, and reg. 143, 502b-504d, the main point is the cowl -and this is only one in Basil following the example of John the Baptist (*Luc* 3:11) and also the tunic, whereas there are two cowls in Saint Benedict's Rule who makes allowances for the different seasons, the weather of the Benedictine establishments in various parts of Europe. The same tradition of the cowl and the monastic tunic appears in other Rules, as in (Jerome) Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Translatio Latina et Interpretatio Regulae S. Pachomii*, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 23, praefatio, pp. 66-67, who mentions the tunic without sleeves of the Egyptian tradition named "*lebitonarium*" (see Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v.) and two cowls, this tradition appears later in Paul the Deacon, *Operum Pars tertia, Epistolae et carmina, Epistolae* 1, *PL* 95, col. 1588A, and in Hrabanus Maurus, *De Clericorum Institutione*, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 101, lib. primus, cap. 39, col. 1242-46. The same insistence in this *topos* of monastic attire on the cowl and tunic with or without *pallium* and *humerales* resounds in practice in the Saints' Lives in the same form and word order as in the oldest Rules mentioned above: e.g. *Vita Patrum Jurensium*, (MGH) *Scr rer Merov* 3, 5; 9, p. 157, 20, Ferandus, *Vita Fulgentii*, AASS, Jan I 18, p. 37, in *Vita Germani Episcopi Autissiodorensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Merov* 7, I, p. 253, 10.

the change in their overall manner of dress. The young women go through the procession without ornaments, bare-headed and in worn and perhaps soiled clothes - not fresh and new - and traverse the class boundaries set by these textile objects, each and every one. They are walking into the everyday dress of the lower classes, seemingly sharing one fate with them - temporarily, of course. Beyond that, their cropped hair signifies the status of the outcast of society, the female that is deprived of its sexual and reproductive capacities,⁵¹ in this case as a sacrifice, making the actors of this ritual, in this total stripping-off of their social identity, equal to the nun, and also the penitent criminal and the slave.

One of the things that stands out in all these three descriptions of garment systems, so far apart in time, place and function, and extracted from different genres of text, is that in the lists of words there are specific words pertaining to textile objects that are there to accentuate specific aspects and functions. In all the cases above, for example, whether it is dress or costume,⁵² one emphasis is on the things (including hair) worn on the head. It is worth examining the possibilities of looking into the use and the meaning of specific words that can be extracted from a garment system of the type just discussed. As an exemplification of this, I will here focus on two cases of words extracted from garment systems: these are the words *vitta* and *velum* – neither of them used in these three texts, but all very common. The reasons for extracting and analysing these words are based on the hope that we can enter into the analysis of an object as a particular case-study while aiming at a further generalization of the correlations within vestimentary systems.

In this examination of two words, the possibilities of organising the references in the sources are presented in a dialectical relationship with the material record. Both

⁵¹ Apart from the popular imagery of long-haired women in poems and what is known about early medieval hairstyles and their significance from the material remains, Isidorus of Seville is explicit on the subject: “*ut in viris tonsi capilli, in mulieribus redundantia crinium, quod maxime virginibus insigne est; quarum et ornatum ipse proprie sic est, ut concumulatus in verticem ipsa capitis sui arcem ambitu crinium contegat*”, Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive originum Libri XX*, (annotated edition Lindsay W.M.), t.II, Oxford Classical Texts, Liber XIX, *De proprio quarundam gentium habitu*, cap. xxiii, 8.

⁵² Costume and dress are used here as what is precisely expressed in Saussure’s distinction between *langue* and *parole* one being the structural side of language, the other the statistical side of it. Dress and costume can be understood here as two levels that already exist in vestimentary systems and on one hand can express the specificity and the occasional and on the other, the demographics of dress manner.

words, relating to headwear, are used metaphorically or literally, as signifiers of social space, but both words also have correlates in archaeological discoveries. The examination of the shifts in meaning, the contextual analysis of the systems, and the usage of these words in isolation, can, when put together, bring us to an understanding of both the imaginary and the social realities of artisanal objects in the early middle ages.

As we saw in the first sections of Chapter 2, garments and woven accessories are described in early medieval sources, either isolated in the texts or together with other items, as parts of a wider garment system. The words for garments imply cultural codes, through the way a textile is mentioned and described. This can reveal practices that are culturally specific for given social groups in a stratified society. Isolated cases of garment accessories can appear in secular or canon law, or to accentuate a situation in a poem; conversely, as we have just seen, garment systems in their entirety can be found to lend an operative value to the text in the examples of monastic and secular word clusters. The 6th-century *Rule of Saint Benedict*⁵³ is handed down to later texts, actually forming and dictating the traditions of monasticism in later *Rules*,⁵⁴ ecclesiastical discourses on vestimentary systems,⁵⁵ and saints' lives.⁵⁶ A common element in all these sources, and the one to have the precedence over the other elements, is headgear; either a cowl or a *casula* that covers the head,⁵⁷ or a different monastic version of a headcovering, as a

⁵³ Benedictus of Nursia, *Regula monachorum*, op. cit. see above notes 41, 42.

⁵⁴ Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Translatio Latina et Interpretatio Regulae S. Pachomii*, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 23, praefatio pp. 66-67, for more examples see note 50. This is a monastic text compiled earlier than the *Rule of Saint Benedict* and the *Rule of the Master*, and it was translated from the Greek around the end of the 5th century.

⁵⁵ Hrabanus Maurus, *De Clericorum Institutione*, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 10, lib. primus, cap. 39, col. 1242-46, (written around 819, Fulda), Bedae Venerabilis *Operum, Pars II, De Tabernaculo et Vasis eius ac Vestibus Sacerdotum Libri tres*, pp. 461-491, (c. 729), Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 91, cap. III-V. *De tunica superhumeralis*.

⁵⁶ For an early example *Vita Patrum Jurensium*, (MGH) *Scr rer Merov* 3, 5, 9, p. 157, 20.

⁵⁷ Theodemar of Monte Cassino, *Epistolae variorum Carolo Magno regnante scriptae* 13, (c.787-797), (MGH) *Epp* 6, pp. 512-513. “*Illud autem vestimentum, quod a Gallicanis monachis cuculla dicitur et nos cappam vocamus, quod propriae monachorum designat habitum, melote appellare debemus. Nam Galliarum monachi hoc laxius et prolixius induuntur; Itali vero monachi, sicut vos nostis, brevius huiusmodi et strictius vestimentum habent: Graeci vero, propter operimentum capitis modicum quiddam tantum ante pectus et a dorso dependens; transmarini autem monachi huiusmodi operimentum pellicium habent*”. A very similar text appears in Paul the Deacon, *Operum Pars tertia, Epistolae et carmina, Epistolae* 1, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 95, col. 1588, A. They both draw directly and quote from Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi*, Lib. 2, Lib 2, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 103, c. 7, 225.

cuculla. This is shown, for example, in a commentary on the practices of, and the materials employed by, several monastic traditions which refer to the Benedictine Rule. Theodemar, who writes this before 797, in Monte Cassino, in a letter addressing Charlemagne, reveals the multiplicity of practices and local interpretations of the most characteristic part of the habit:

...We call [the cowl that we have] *cuculla* and in other words *casula*. ...so that the dress that proves to be the habit of the monks, we should call it *melote*.... As the monks in Gaul wear it ample and long, but the Italian monks wear it somewhat shorter and it is a tighter piece of garment that they put on; whereas the Greeks wear it as a covering of the head without folds, of medium proportions that falls both over their front and the back; while the monks across the sea wear a kind of head covering made of fur.

In the secular garment system for royal women found in the narrative of Fortunatus,⁵⁸ from the end of the 6th century, we have seen how St Radegund's garments are offered in a stylised manner which puts the emphasis on her complex headcoverings. The Queen, daughter of the king of Thuringia, Berthechar, perhaps wore those in a dress idiom where Thuringian elements were in use.⁵⁹ Expressions of symbolism of wealth, and its headwear as in this example, can acquire interpretations at different levels: and this because they can transmit complex social realities where ethnic, regional, and even individual identities can interface with religious fervour and symbols of royal power. The realities that are described can be analysed as reflecting the intentions of the writer, or the understanding of his contemporaries; but they can also, if the text is a biography of

It is also possible that they both comment on Benedictus de Nursia, *Regula monachorum*, LV, cap. 9-14, and on the *Rule of the Master*, cap. 25-33, on seasonal change of the monk's clothes, especially in the Rule of the Master, about the different climates and their impact on the clothing of the monks. (Benedictus of Nursia, op.cit., notes 41, cap. LV, cap. 9-14; pp. 914-919).

⁵⁸ Fortunatus, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Merov* 2, 1, 13, 265f.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, "...quotiens quasi mafortem novum, lineum savanum, auro vel gemmis ornatum more vestiebat de barbaro, a circumstantibus puellis si laudaretur pulcherrimum, indignam se adjudicans tali componi linteolo, mox exuens se vestimento, dirigebat loco sancto, quiquis esset in proximo, et pro palla ponebatur divinum super altare.", (MGH), *Scr rer Merov* 2, 1, 9, 65f, p. 368....Whenever she wore a new linen headscarf, like a covering, decked with gold and jewels after the barbarian's custom, and was praised by the young girls of her entourage for being very beautiful, she would judge herself unworthy to be adorned with such a garment and soon divested herself of this clothing. She would arrange that it be taken to whatever church was nearest and laid over the holy altar for a covering. (Trans. based on trans. by Petersen J.M., (ed. and trans.), in *Handmaids of the Lord. Contemporary descriptions of female asceticism in the first six Christian centuries*, Cistersian Studies Series 143, (Kalamazoo, 1996), p. 385).

someone known to the writer, be based on a personal account of the individual. We can speak about the symbolism of wealth in the description by Agnellus, of the procession in Ravenna.⁶⁰ Most of the elements described there have to do with things worn on or around the head or the hairdo, but the main factor here is the age and the status of the women of a single region. The use of the part of the costume that is meant for secular public ritual, mostly worn outdoors by women in special occasions, brings together descriptions from different places and times and becomes the common vehicle to underline the disparities between social experiences and social roles in different times and contexts.

In the example of Theodemar and also in Paul the Deacon, headwear is once more the element that is used to convey the local differences and the diversities in the interpretation of the same *Rule of Saint Benedict*.⁶¹ The variations in the *cuculla*, *casula*, *melote* and the way it is worn by Italian, Frankish, Greek, Insular monks correspond to the writer's subjective perception of the cultural divide between these regions. It is a common religious symbolism that is expressed here, set against the different cultural identities and perhaps ethnicity - to the degree that Theodemar and Paul the Deacon understand it - and the disparities in everyday practice of dress manner even in men who share a common outlook of life and more or less the same Rule.

Religious symbolism and symbolism of power can be expressed in the items of the headdress, one of the most visible and obvious ways to convey social roles: status, gender, age, situation in life, locality. Individual identity remains one important element of reality outside social roles but, for this, we are entirely at the mercy of our sources. The hypothesis we can work on is that the analysis of headwear in examples of various vestimentary systems can show how much information can be assessed through it, on social roles, living experience and practice. Altogether, these are enough reasons to examine how early medieval headgear can bring us closer to an understanding of the meaning and the function of clothes and of clothing systems.

⁶⁰ Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Langob et ital saec VI- IX*, pp. 362-363. See note 45.

⁶¹ The description of the habit and the rest in the same letter takes only a short paragraph. No special terms are used there to signify the different names of the parts of the habit as in the case of the cowls of Benedictines all around Christianity.

2.5 Textual evidence of headwear and the material record

Before putting under examination two words extracted from a garment system, it is necessary to show the ways that textile objects, clothes and their accessories are in general used to signify social codes and cultural categories of status, age and gender in the period between 500- 900 in the Frankish world and Anglo-Saxon England.⁶² The study of these textile objects in the texts, examined in correlation with the evidence of the archaeology of headgear, can lead us to identify some of the social signifiers of social roles attested in the source material within this chosen time span.

Authors do not always use the same word for any given item of clothing. It is also possible that a single word can have two separate meanings, and that the author is taking full advantage of that. Whatever might be the case, it is always a cultural message that is being transmitted, as we saw in Chapter 1. What should be stressed here is that an understanding of the use of these artefacts, and of the meanings ascribed to them in the descriptions found in the source material, will be approached first within the context of the documentary sources, that is, the textual - so to speak, internal -⁶³ evidence. Once we have done that, we can look at the archaeology, if there is any available, and if it is in a state of conservation that does not make things even more difficult. This is one of the well-known problems when dealing with the interpretation of textile artefacts⁶⁴ and

⁶² First, a methodological introduction to the problems of how to do this work will be presented here, and then a re-examination of the evidence in relation to the two examples of words used to describe headgear, to illustrate its possibilities.

⁶³ We will have to accept here that the term that is found in the written sources was chosen for a reason and that this is the closer we can get to the point of view of the period under examination, concerning the specificity of an object. It is in this sense that textual evidence is approached as internal -neither complete nor true in itself nevertheless.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 3, discussion in section 3.6, pp. 233-241. Formal features of decoration in textiles and physical description of weaves and woven fabrics, have formed a tradition of art historical interpretation in cases where there is an abundant textile corpus of material, especially when found *in situ* as in the case of Coptic textiles. (For a critical presentation of the methods of reconstruction of dress in Coptic and Byzantine textiles, see Thomas T, "Coptic and Byzantine Textiles found in Egypt: Corpora, collections and scholarly perspectives", in Bagnall R.S, (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300-700*, (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 137-162.) In western European textiles, the picture is less optimistic: there is a lot of material evidence but this is not uniform throughout even in the same special and temporal contexts, or sharing the same formalistic characteristics as the Coptic tunics, sashes and shawls. At times scholars have interpreted as dress items what arbitrarily would make sense to them as such (e.g. Childeric's "crown" in the 19th century

related metalwork accessories in their corporeal sense, from the archaeology, and to an extent is caused by uncertainties about how these items were actually worn and also about what their specific meaning was to a particular society and to the individual who used them. If, however, we look at these material objects through a study of the words in texts, we may get a better sense of the meanings of the objects.

It does not seem legitimate, however, to be too closely dependent on the representation of social status as expressed in the dress codes in the individual historical sources which offer us the descriptions of clothing systems, including the headgear of the élites, that we have. This difficulty arises especially when we try to depict actual clothing of this period, or when we try to reconstruct the clothing system from the archaeology. The evidence needs to be placed in the wider possible textual context and cross-referenced to the possible archaeological material equivalents. My approach here will, rather, focus on the possibility of a contrast between the symbolic representations of clothes in the written source material of different genres, and the early medieval clothing that actually survives from the past. A further distinction should be drawn here between those written representations which are apparently symbolic in their entirety, and these representations which have apparent correlates to the real textile objects worn at the time of the authors by real people, as shown in the archaeology of 6th and 7th century Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, although we must recognise that it is not easy to tell the difference on some occasions.

My aim here, then, is to interpret or decode the cultural messages of particular words to describe headgear and to explore their relationship to the actual artefacts.

Both categories, the description and the artefact, signify symbolic values whose understanding lies within our reach, if we grasp some of the meanings and the uses of the same textile objects. One important difference between the two different corpora of evidence is that in literary texts the objects of the headgear can be fictional in their entirety, employed for the needs of the text, the author, the genre, the audience, and may

was convincingly supported to be the rim of an ornamented bucket in the next century, when more of the kind had seen the light in excavations, see Effros B, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*, (Berkeley, 2003), esp. pp. 23-35). Here, it will be attempted a reconstruction of the ways something was worn, when the criteria I will propose allow a reconstruction and this for only a limited number of cases.

give little information about real life; and if they do the information is restricted to the lifestyle of the élite. An example is the poems of Venantius Fortunatus when he employs what can be seen as late Roman terminology – the imagery of diadems, for example - to praise his royal patrons.⁶⁵ What has long been considered as rhetoric, however, has sometimes been proved to be reality by the archaeological record of headwear, for archaeological finds show a much more varied picture of what people used to wear on their heads than even the most imaginative written sources.⁶⁶ Hagiographical genres, which also involve descriptions of élites but can also represent headgear in actual use by people from all walks of life, can be just as helpful. There is more information on the form of the textile and accessories, and on the reasons why people wear something, when the object of the narrative is not the description of the splendour of the clothing in itself.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* Lib.VIII, *De Virginitate* (MGH) *Auct. Antiquiss* 4, p. 188, lines 265-280.

<p>“<i>Inseritur capiti radians diadema beryllis Ordinibus variis alba zmaragdus inest. Alligat et nitidos amethystine vitta capillos margaritato flexilis arte sinu...</i>”</p>	<p>...A sparkling diadem was intertwined on the head of beryls in a varied pattern and an inset bright emerald interlaced and constricted with the fillet adorned with amethysts, the shining hair, was twisted with pearls folded artfully in it.</p>
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The classical imagery seems to be out of place in the late 6th century. No diadems of this sort have survived except for a large number of fillets made of spun gold thread in a silk brocaded braid worn on the forehead. 69 examples survive up to date *in situ* in burials of the 6th mostly and less often in the 7th century around Europe (See Appendix I). The *vitta* here is something different than the diadem. Without the exception of an unique diadem found in the Upper Loire (Lelong C., “Sépulture mérovingienne de Perusson (Indre-et-Loire),” *Archéologie médiévale* 6 (1976), pp. 219-231), we could have said that no diadems of that sort ever existed in Fortunatus times. The only surviving example though, bears no encrusted gem-decoration. (nor cheaper equivalents like glass-mass or enamel) fig 1a,b.

⁶⁶ For the multiplicity of forms and functions of headwear all over e.g. Merovingian Europe, see Appendix I (Frankish, Visigothic, Alamannic, Bavarian, Thuringian, Longobardic, Anglo-Saxon gold foil braids). These include longer or shorter veils, fillets with tubes, or pendants, or *pendilia*, veils that are covered with embroidery, caps with beads, systems of beads; all sorts of hairpins; cowls; These last more original versions and the most intricate decoration patterns derive from contexts in Italy that is why their inclusion was necessary for comparative purposes. As we mentioned before, there is evidence for a diadem also, see note 65.

⁶⁷ As in the description of the rough dirty veil of a woman pilgrim given to Gertrude of Nivelles, *Vita S. Geretrudis*, (MGH) *Scr rerMerov* 2, pp. 461-462) and included in her last wishes for a simple burial: “*Cumque ad diem pervenit extremum, ita decrevit, ut in ipso sepulture locum nullum laneum nec lineum vestimentum super se misissent praeter unum velum vile multum, quo quaedam peregrine sanctimonialis ante dies plures illi pro benedictione direxerat ad capud cooperiendum, et ipsum cilicium: In sepulchro, ubi in pace quiescit, nullo alio velamine cooperire, exceptis his duobus, cilicio, quo induta fuerat, et panno vetere, quo ipsum cilicium tegebatur.*” The focus is on the action here, and the textiles are only the means for this action, so the description can be closer to reality than in a poem, as in this case where we get to know how Saint Gertrude stated she wanted to be dressed for burial. See more on this in Effros B., “Symbolic expressions of Sanctity: Gertrude of Nivelles in the context of Merovingian Mortuary Custom,” *Viator* 27 (1996), esp. pp. 1-6.

The two words extracted from a garment system that we will look at are the words *vitta* and *velum*. The *vitta* can be translated roughly as a fillet or hair-band, which can be understood in the light of the written sources, the archaeological finds and contemporary art as a ribbon made of silk or leather or other material, or a tablet- woven braid, or a gold brocaded system of braids. In the written sources, and in one instance in archaeology such a ribbon is also found as part of a diadem. The *velum* corresponds to a shorter or longer veil. We know from papal letters, and ecclesiastical and secular legislative sources of the 7th to the 9th century,⁶⁸ that *velum* is also the veil that a nun, and a widow, but also a bride are expected to wear.⁶⁹ The material record supplies us with a much wider variety of forms of female headwear,⁷⁰ even just for the period of the furnished burials, between the end of the 5th to the middle of the 7th century, and it is not possible to use the two terms to describe everything found in that record. The point here is that there is a variety of form and of function and also of social roles and codes denoted here, both in the written record and in its material equivalents. It is useful to have in mind the associative relationship between the two artefacts: the *vitta* can crown and keep in

These examples serve here to show how at times, the textual evidence can be combined successfully to the material record.

⁶⁸ See Gelasii I Pap. *Epist* 14, A (a. 494), col. 1, 12, *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae sunt a S. Hilario usque ad Pelagium* II, Thiel, A. (ed.), (Braunsberg, 1868), p. 369; *Decretum Compendiense* (757), in *Pippini Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A. (eds.) (*MGH*) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 5, p. 38; in *Episcoporum ad Hlud imperatore ad relatio* (a. 829), in *Additamenta ad Hludovici Pii Capitularia*, A. Boretius and V. Krause, (eds.), (*MGH*) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 47, 48, 50, 51, p. 42. Also, in *Concilium Triburiense* (895), in *Additamenta ad Capitularia Regum Franciae Orientalis*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (*MGH*) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 23, 24, 25, pp. 226-228; in *Decretum Vermeriense* (758-768), in *Pippini Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A. (eds.) (*MGH*) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 16, 21, p. 41; in *Capitula ab episcopis in placito tractanda* (a. 829), in *Hludovici Pii Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (*MGH*) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 2, 3 p. 7; in *Ansegisi Abbatís Capitularium collectio Libri* IV, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.) (*MGH*) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), Lib. I, clauses 45, 57, 71, 72, Lib. II, clause 40, pp. 401-404, 423.

⁶⁹ In this respect, there is variety of the material forms of headwear, and on the other hand also a variety of functions attested in the sources of this period where *velum* is charged with special symbolism. It is far less often that the word is found to mean just a veil - in Saint' Lives- see note 67. One of the reasons this is so, is that for the classical Latin authors, *velum* is a ship sail (Caesar. *De bello Gallico*. 3.13.4) or a sheet stretched out to provide shelter from the sun (Livy. *Historiae*. 24.36.8), a curtain (Tacitus. *Annales*.13.5), and less often a ceremonial cover of the head for ritual purposes (Verg. *Aeneid*. 5.134). Romans used either the general terms *velamentum*, *velamen*, that survived into early medieval Latin, or to describe the specific *palla*, *amiculum*, *peplum*, *maforte* found in Isidorus of Seville, (see note 51, Liber. XIX, xxiv-xxvi, *De paliis feminarum*, c. 25) and extremely rarely elsewhere in early medieval authors, and this strictly in poetic use.

⁷⁰ See Appendix I.

place a veil, or else it can consist of a system of ribbons and fillets – or an elaboration of this as in the interlacing ribbons and plaited hair kept in place with pins, under one or two veils found in the sources and in the archaeology.⁷¹ But, of course, these two items are also found separately in the sources in a number of different social situations.

Both of these terms are mentioned in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville in the early 7th century.⁷² According to this writer, *vittae* are strips of cloth forming a headdress, and their purpose is to keep women's hair in place.

...*Vittae* are these that encircle the hair, which are flowing and bind them to the head and are called *vittae* because they bind.

...*Taenia* also is the hanging end of the *vittae*, of many colours.

They form in the text part of a system of head ornaments of women alongside the *diadema*, the *mitra*, the *retiolum*, the *capitulum*, which are all, however derived from late Roman sources⁷³ and quite possibly have little to do with Isidore's own reality in Spain. Perhaps the multiplicity of these terms reflects the linguistic variety of Latin in Spain or at least as used by Isidore⁷⁴ because with the exceptions of Gregory of Tours and Fortunatus,⁷⁵ the term *vitta* hardly recurs in other sources of the early medieval period

⁷¹ Angilbert, *Carmen de Carolo Magno* 188, (MGH) *Poet. Lat. Med. Aevi* I, 88, pp. 371-372 A possible reconstruction of the finds related to headwear in the reliquary of St Balthild (See pp. 115, 118-119 in this Chapter) can provide us with the late 7th century material equivalent.

⁷² Isidorus Hispalensis, op. cit., note 51, Liber XIX, xxxii, cap. 19, *De palliis feminarum, De ornamentis capitis feminarum, De instrumentis vestium*, “*Vittae sunt quae crinibus innectuntur, quibus fluentes religantur capilli, at vittae dictae, quod vinciant*”, also “*Taenia autem est vittarum extremitas dependens diversorum colorum*.”

⁷³ All writers quoted on this page, used to cite from Vergil several times, an author who had used *vitta*. These words are found in Greek and Latin authors of the classical antiquity to describe women's high status, and religious festive headresses. A *vitta* in classical Latin authors refers to the woollen “fillets” worn by a priest, and it is used for ritual or ceremonial purposes, a sacrificial or sacerdotal fillet in Ovid. *Met.* 2. 413; 4.6; 5. 10, 13. 643; Vergil. *Aeneid.* 2. 133, 10. 538; as symbol of the sacred office of poets, Vergil. *Aeneid.* 6. 665; worn by brides and Vestal virgins as a symbol of chastity, Ovid. *Epist. Ex Pont.* 3.3.51, it could be bound around the altar or sacred trees, and it was usually made of wool, Ovid. *Met.* 8. 744, see *Oxford Latin Dictionary* s.v.

⁷⁴ See pp. 120-127 for the literary evidence of headbands from Francia, Anglo-Saxon England.

⁷⁵ See note 65. Also in Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum Libri X*, (MGH) *Scr. rer. Merov.* II, Krusch B. (ed), (Hannover, 1951), X. 16, p. 505. The *vitta* is mentioned in the scandal at the convent Poitiers, where the abbess was accused by the nuns and also royal princesses Clothild and Basina of having cut off some gold foil leaf from the edge of a purple altar cloth and had made a *vitta*-necklace or a hairband- for her-engaged to be married-niece. “...ad tabulam ipsa luserit atque saeculares cum abbatissa refecerent, etiam cum

until the late 9th century.⁷⁶ The term *taenia* does actually give a tangible description of what is found in a number of cases in the archaeological record. The gold foil strip found in the material record is usually the weft and covers only the front in most cases.⁷⁷ *Taenia* could have been the word used for a thread warp that has decomposed, or of the ribbon that was used to lace the braid at the back of the head, according to Isidore's description above. This word too, however, is never again to be found in the sources after Isidore. *Velum* is cited by Isidore⁷⁸ as the curtain that protects the interior and the privacy of a house. It forms part of a system of household textiles and it is not included by Isidore in the section about the headcoverings of women.⁷⁹ It is next found in the written sources as headwear in the Saints' Lives of the late 7th-8th century and ecclesiastical legislation of the 8th-9th century.⁸⁰ There is no other clue as to any correspondence of these words with actual objects, or any relation between types of headgear apart from the *vitta* and the *taenia*. Isidore is seldom of any help in describing verbatim early medieval "realities", but at least he pays attention to both words; he shows they were standard parts of conceptual systems, as we shall see in a moment.

sponsalia in monasterio facta sint; de palla olosyrica vestimenta neptae suae temerariae fecerit; foliola aurea, quae fuerant in gyro palla, inconsulte sustulerit et ad collum neptae suae facinorose suspenderit; vittam de auro exornatam idem neptae suae superfluae fecerit, barbaturias intus eo quod celebraverit."
See translation in note 232.

⁷⁶ See note 106, Angilbert's poem, and also the poem *De Virginitate* of the Anglo-Saxon Aldhelm, see note 249

⁷⁷ Usually in the cases of gold foil strip remains, for very few of the cases in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England (see Appendix 1) contain a sufficient quantity of gold brocading weft to suggest that the head was completely encircled by a gold ornamented band. This leaves room for an interwoven textile fibre warp that encircled the head and formed a ribbon to tie the band at the back of the head. (a *taenia/tenia* in the 13th century, see Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v.). This is supported by the fact that the gold foil strip usually preserves the warp impressions and the pattern of the textile warp on the metal weft. According to Cook, A.M., *The Evidence for the Reconstruction of Female Costume in the Early Anglo-Saxon period in the South of England*, Unpublished MA Thesis, (The University of Birmingham, 1974), esp. pp.49-52), it is likely that in some instances the braid continued around the back of the head in a less decorated or in an undecorated form while the gold section was worn around the forehead. It is very seldom that we have a braid found intact where the weft and warp are made of gold foil strip. It is not very possible that the mass of gold foil strip found in the majority of the case studies in Appendix 1 formed braids of gold in their entirety. The braid found in the Princess Grave at Cologne Cathedral is a unique case where chains of appliqué gold foil cover the warp of the fabric, that is the vertical direction of the weaving system. This supports further the point of the variety in the form of this accessory. (Doppelfeld O., "Das Frauengrab unter dem Chor des Kölner Domes," *Germania* 38 (1960), pp. 89-113, pl. 14.5.) See fig 5.

⁷⁸ Isidorus Hispalensis, op. cit., note 51, Lib. XIX, xxvi-xxvii, cap. 26, *De stratu et reliquis vestibus quae in usu habentur*.

⁷⁹ See note 72. The word used instead of veil is *amiculum, amictus, peplum, palla, stola, pallium, linteolum, sindona*, see Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v.

⁸⁰ See notes 67, 68, 275, 279, 280.

Before I discuss either *vitta* or *velum* as words, let us look at the archaeology of both headbands and veils (bearing in mind that none of the people who wore these necessarily called them *vitta* or *velum*).

The material evidence for headbands and veils derives mostly from the period of the furnished burials, between the late 5th to the middle of the 7th century and from a few preserved relics from the late 7th century. In the furnished burial rite, the bodies of men, women and children were inhumed in pits, built graves, sarcophagi, under *tegulae* and burial chambers of wood or of stone, fully dressed, sometimes covered with a shroud or other coverings, and were accompanied with furnishings and accessories (tools, weapons, pottery, glass vessels and sometimes food). The general ideological and cultural traits of this rite, which expanded in North-west Europe in the 5th century, does not link it with particular regions or particular religious concepts. It is observed in urban and rural contexts in most parts of Francia, Frisia, Germany, Scandinavia, Lombard Italy, Visigothic Spain, and Anglo-Saxon England. The explanations for the reasons behind the clothed and accompanied burial will not be our concern here. It is important, though, to point out that the contraction of these burials, and the abandonment of the sites and the gradual substitution with unaccompanied shrouded burials around churches and chapels, meant the end of a broad cultural horizon and the dearth of vestimentary assemblages for the late 7th-8th century onwards. This explains why the most material evidence that we have on headwear, headbands and veils derives from a specific time span.

Headbands, representing Latin textual references to *vittae*, have been archaeologically attested *in situ* in more than 69 cases covering the 6th-7th centuries with two in the late 5th century and in three more from the middle of the 8th century. A concentration in the North of Francia and the Rhine valley of these artefacts has been proposed,⁸¹ but as we will see shortly, a closer look into them and the most recent material shows that they had a wide Continental and insular distribution.⁸² This type of headband was mostly in fashion among the women of local élites in the 6th century, and an intensification of its use is attested between 600-700, both in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England. There are 25 cases of gold foil braids, used as headbands, mostly from 6th

⁸¹ See note 85, Crowfoot, Chadwick-Hawkes, pp. 42-43.

⁸² See Appendix I (braids).

century Kent, including one from Hollywell Row and one at Chessel Down, all in female graves.⁸³ After the 7th century, by contrast, they are mostly found as decorative borders of élite male clothing.⁸⁴

In general, braids are found in Frankish, Alamannic, Bavarian, Anglo-Saxon, Lombard and a few Visigothic female élite burials.⁸⁵ There are two main varieties: most of the Continental and all the insular braids are made of brocaded flat strips of gold foil, which is by far the most usual type, while the second type, thin filigree gold foil spun around a fibre core, is evidenced in Cologne, Paris, Italy, and very sporadically in Northern Francia in the 6th century and in Bavaria in the later 7th century. This may reflect the possibility that gold brocading of the latter type had spread in the Late Roman West urban centres, into Spain and Gaul, and it has been suggested that the earlier examples, of the later 5th and early 6th century, were survivals of Gallo-Roman craft of the *fabricarii* and *plumarii*.⁸⁶ This tradition seems to have hold on in the Frankish royal centres, into the 7th and 8th centuries. Spun gold is unknown in Anglo-Saxon England until the later 8th century, when it is used in the embroideries at Maaseik, Belgium.⁸⁷

The varieties of headband and their distribution over space and time can supply us with a rich corpus of information, especially because of the fact that they are worn on the head, given that we have already seen in the examples from the texts that this is a distinct social and cultural signifier. The same technique and the same use as a headband was preserved with braids made of wool-yarn warp and weft brocades in different colours,

⁸³ Ibidem.

⁸⁴ See Appendix I (braids) as in Taplow, the most elaborate braids of the whole corpus, spun in the soumak weave, (for more on this term, see Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures), a weaving method of Scandinavian provenance, Prittlewell, and the St Denis male burials, and the Lower Bavarian élite male graves.

⁸⁵ See Appendix I and Crowfoot E., Chadwick-Hawkes S., “Early Anglo-Saxon gold braids,” *Medieval Archaeology* 11 (1967), pp. 42-86 and also Pejtrani Baricco L., (ed.), *Presenze Longobarde. Collegno nell’alto medioevo*, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Piemonte, (Città di Collegno, 2004), pp. 173-175.

⁸⁶ See note 85, Crowfoot, Chadwick-Hawkes, op.cit., p. 55; for the *fabricarii* and *plumarii*, *Diokletians Preisdict, Edict on prices*, (301), XIX, Lauffer S., (ed.), (Berlin, 1971), texts n° 56, 265, 266, 267, 268.

⁸⁷ Evidenced in the English-made embroideries and tablet weaves and in a small clew of spun-gold thread, a stray find from an 8th century pit at Southampton, St Mary’s, see Walton-Rogers P., *Cloth and Clothing in Anglo-Saxon England A D 450-700*, (York, 2007), p. 98.

and also for wrist-cuffs, girdles and for borders of veils; there is archaeological evidence for this from Anglian sites of the 6th century.⁸⁸

All braids consist of brocaded tablet-woven strips of gold foil or spun gold associated with different fabric traces, usually of silk. Archaeological textiles, in general, still exist in a material form because the fibres have been completely replaced by oxides, as a result of ferrous objects that were in direct contact with them, or have been mineralised when in contact with other non-ferrous metals, and therefore traces of them have survived. In the case of the gold foil, sometimes there is a core of fibre surviving around which the gold foil was wound. Otherwise, in the case of gold foil no traces of the textile exists⁸⁹ except when this survives in association with another metal object.

Braids in general, including the common textile fibre variety, were woven by the insertion of a supplementary weft in a different colour or material - in this case gold foil strips - and brocaded into the surface of the band. Tablet weaving is worked by threading each hole of every tablet with a separate warp thread; then the warp is pulled taut, so that the threads in the upper holes divide into a separate plane from those on the lower edge of the tablets.⁹⁰ Then the set of the tablets is rotated, and each tablet twists a cord. The method for brocading is to lift up select warp threads with the fingers or a band-weaving shuttle and pass the brocading weft underneath.⁹¹ The gold foil braids can be woven simultaneously with the thread and flattened and burnished later, as attested in a wide variety of such objects, for example in Normandy in a number of burials of the 6th century,⁹² or in the case of the female burial of St Severin at Cologne dated to the late 6th

⁸⁸ See discussion of Anglo-Saxon material in pp. 97-99 and notes 126-136 and fig 3, the case of the red woolen veil with the brocaded headband over the temple and ear, in a female burial, probably held fast at the back of the neck, found *in situ* at West Heslerton, grave 123, see note 85, Walton-Rogers, op.cit., pp. 157-159.

⁸⁹ See Appendix I (braids).

⁹⁰ The process reminds one of cat's cradle, see Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures and Walton-Rogers, op. cit., note 87, pp. 35-36 and 96-97 also see note 85, Crowfoot, Chadwick-Hawkes.

⁹¹ A few square weaving tablets, one of ivory, of 33 x 33 mm were found at Kingston Down, female burial 299 and another of bone, of 30 x 36 mm from the 7th century phase of the settlement at West Heslerton and one bone hand-weaver's shuttle from the 7th century settlement at Chalton, see Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 87, p. 35. No small band boat shuttles or tablets have been recovered from settlements in Francia, although band weaving was popular there too, according to the evidence for the numerous gold foil braids.

⁹² L'Abbé Cochet, *Les sépultures gauloises, romaines, franques, et normandes*, (rééd.) Le Portulan, (Paris, 1976), p. 180 and 241. The given dates are generic-around the middle of the 6th century -and the braids were not found *in situ*.

century on the basis of numismatic evidence.⁹³ Similar strips can be also found in male graves, as we saw earlier, and can be easily taken or mistaken for headbands. That headbands were used for males can only be suggested once for one such strip, which was found *in situ* in the Childeric II burial from the abbatial basilica of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, translated there after 675.⁹⁴ There are no remains, but we have to rely on the description of a late 17th century eye-witness, who describes a collective burial of the King with Queen Bilichild and their infant son Dagobert. The gold foil braid seemed to rest over a piece of gold-woven cloth, a *sudarium* over the face of an individual - but this person could have been the Queen as well- and the chances for this braid to have been worn by the King are rather remote.

Apart from this case, however, the gold foil braid has not been found anywhere else as a headband for a man. It is however often found in male burials as a decorative strip of a tunic, a mantle, wrist-clasped cuffs, a hood, a scabbard or a belt, or a girdle as in the examples of the brocaded decoration of the clothes and the scabbard of the late 6th-century male burial of Famars in Belgium and of the Sutton Hoo royal burial of the 620's.⁹⁵

To give a sense of the statistics, it is worth saying that from a total of 25 royally-associated burials of the late 6th to the beginning of the 7th century excavated in Saint-Denis,⁹⁶ only ten contained remains of gold thread decoration and less than four of them supply us with enough stratigraphical evidence to show that the braids could have been used as headbands.⁹⁷ The reason for this may have been a change in fashion for women in

⁹³ Salin E., *La civilisation mérovingienne*, vol. IV, (Paris, 1959), p. 434, also see Appendix I, Alamannic, Bavarian, Thuringian archaeological sources (braids).

⁹⁴ Salin E., op.cit., note 93, vol. IV, p. 435, also see Appendix I, Frankish archaeological sources, braids, n° 18.

⁹⁵ Leman P., Beausart P., "Une riche tombe mérovingienne à Famars," *Archéologia* 81 (avril 1975), pp. 34-40, See Appendix II (Frankish sources, Austrasian-Rhineland sites and Anglo-Saxon sources, Saxon sites).

⁹⁶ Salin E., op. cit., note 93, p. 436 also see Appendix I (Frankish archaeological sources, braids), n° 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

⁹⁷ Of these ten burials in Saint-Denis with gold-foil strip decoration, there were four women (n° 7, mid 6th century, n° 8, in the mid 6th century, n° 14 in the 7th century, n° 15, (of a generic date in the 6th to mid 7th century), n° 16, late 6th to the middle of the 7th century, a female child (n° 9, mid 7th century), four men, n° 10, (in the late 7th century), n° 11, (in the 7th century), n° 12, (first half of 7th century), n° 13, (around 650), this one having gold foil debris on the body; an individual of unspecified sex, n° 17 (with a generic date from late 5th to 7th century). In some of the above cases (n° 7, 8, 15, 16, notably the child and the women) the remains of the gold foil strip or the braid when this was found in a better state of preservation, was

comparison to earlier female burials so as a proportion of privileged or even royal women wore headbands of gold foil. A second point to be made is that the data show a restriction of the use of the braid as a headband to females, since all the Saint-Denis individuals with braids near the head were female and buried around the end of the 6th to the middle of the 7th century. Even if we accept that other varieties of headdress, made of perishable materials such as braids made of silk fibre or wool, did exist, and that men could have used them, nonetheless more than half of the women out of a total of 25 burials who were buried in Saint-Denis in the late 6th to the 7th century wore fillets of the kind under examination here. Each of these braids are however different from the point of view of the techniques that were employed and also of their visual effect and function. One braid was made by the soumak technique,⁹⁸ in another, the gold foil strips were wrapped around textile cores, and in another gold tubes were suspended from the foil that was used as a weft.⁹⁹ In burial n° 9, a child seems to have been buried in a shroud with a hood whose edge was decorated by two different kinds of braid, made of flat sheets of gold foil strip and also of spun gold.

The varieties of headdress attested archaeologically include brocades used at the front of and in the borders and intervals of a long veil, as in the Kentish female grave 105 C at Mill Hill, Kent¹⁰⁰ dated to the second half of the 6th century. Headbands could also be secured with two brooches, one on top of the head, as in the remains of the short fillet of the Holywell Row female child burial, dated to the middle of the 6th century.¹⁰¹ In a unique case of a burial of a woman inside a sarcophagus, Grave 6 in the church of Perusson (Indre-et-Loire),¹⁰² dated between 580-610, five different textiles, a

found near the head or shoulders or the upper portion of the infill near the skull, (n° 16), or associated with the earrings.

⁹⁸ See Textile Terms and Procedures, Appendix III, “soumak”, see supra note 97 for the grave context of the braids in Saint-Denis.

⁹⁹ See Appendix 1, Frankish archaeological sources (braids), n° 7, 8, 13, 15, 16.

¹⁰⁰ Parfitt K., Brugmann B., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Mill Hill, Deal, Kent*, The Society for Medieval Archeology Monograph series n° 14, (London, 1997), pp. 31-2, p. 160, p. 192, fig 55, p. 213, fig 76, see discussion in Owen-Crocker G. *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 96-101 and interpretation in Appendix I, Anglo-Saxon Archaeological sources, (braids), n° 21 and Appendix II. See fig 4.

¹⁰¹ Lethbridge T.C., *Recent excavations in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Cambridge and Suffolk*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Quarto Publications, III, 1931, p.4ff, figs 2-3, plan 3; Crowfoot E., Chadwick-Hawkes S, op. cit., note 85, pp. 51- 56 passim and Owen-Crocker G, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 97 and interpretation in Appendix I, (Anglo-Saxon archaeological sources), (braids), n° 20.

¹⁰² See fig 1 and note 65

silk veil and a blue silk damask brocaded mantle, silver cross-garters and shoes, and a golden filigree diadem, were preserved in position.¹⁰³ This last was made of fine spirals of 1 cm to 0.5 mm, the thickness of which varied between 26 mm to 4 mm with a pressed decoration of triangles.¹⁰⁴ As we have seen, this matches a *vitta* described in Fortunatus in the late 6th century,¹⁰⁵ and here it is possibly associated with a veil under a silk taffeta weft-faced patterned mantle. It may well also show that Angilbert's much later poetic use of *corona* and *vitta*¹⁰⁶ to describe the elaborate headdresses of the female entourage of Charlemagne, both married and unmarried, were not just stereotypical poetic exaggerations. But this is as far as we can go, for, the second part of the 8th and the 9th century have left us no material examples of headdresses.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Lelong C., "Sépulture mérovingienne de Perusson (Indre-et-Loire)," *Archéologie médiévale* 6 (1976), pp. 219-231. The central location of the sarcophagus points to a member of the élite of the area. It contained the body of a female in her late forties dressed in five different textiles. The head was covered in a long silk veil of unknown colour reaching her lower back, probably a local product, for the rest of the clothing and the associated finds. See Appendix I (Frankish burials) and Appendix II (Frankish courses, Neustrian and Upper-Loire, Centre sites, Perusson). See fig 2.1.abcd.

¹⁰⁴ The usual thickness of Merovingian and Longobardic gold-foil strips varies between 0.04-0.07mm, according to my statistical results based on the data provided in Appendix I. See Appendix I (braids). The Late Roman strips are even finer. The dimensions of the Perusson braid show that this is a different artefact made with a different technique and distinct decoration to achieve an entirely different aesthetic effect. It is worn, though, in the same way as a *vitta*, that is, around the skull of the woman, encircling the crown of the head. So, this is a different object from a *vitta*, expressing probably personal taste and making a statement about opulence or even used as an ethnic marker or statement of local provenance, as supported by the glass objects from further North Francia and also the *exotica*, the Lombard or Byzantine mantle. Nomatter what are the reasons for having such an object, it succeeds in making a marked aesthetic effect and surely had a peculiar feel and wear of its own. Still, its place and function in the clothing system of the person buried in Sép. 6, points that it is still one variation within the similar vestimentary systems of Central-north Francia of the 590's that could be less homogeneous than expected.

¹⁰⁵ See note 65, op.cit., pp. 220-226.

¹⁰⁶ Angilbert, *Carmina* VI, *Carmen de Carolo Magno* 188, (*MGH*) *Poet Lat Med Aevi* 1, 88, pp. 371-372. (Trans. based on the French trans. by Salin E., Salin E., *La civilisation Mérovingienne d'après les Sépultures, les Textes, les Laboratoires*, vol. I, (Paris, 1949-1955), p. 111).

"Rhodrud .:

<i>Immixa est niveis ametistina vitta capilis, ...</i>	Her hair that resembles snow-flakes are interlaced with
<i>Ordinibus variis gemmarum luce coruscans :</i>	a fillet the colour of amethyst. This is distributed among
<i>Namque corona caput pretiosis aurea gemmis</i>	the blinding shine of the gems of various types. Apart
<i>Implicat et pulchrum subnectit fibula amictum"</i>	from these, a gold diadem with precious gems encircles

her head. A brooch fastens her lovely garment.

"Bertha :caput aurato diademate cingitur alnum	That venerable head is entoured by a golden
<i>Aurea se niveis commiscens fila capillis"</i>	diadem. The golden foil is mixed with her snow-like hair

The description of Rhodrud's headband "*ametistina vitta capilis*" indicates the possibility that Angilbert is echoing or copying in this the topos by Fortunatus *amethystine vitta capillos*. *Vitta* is used here, and *corona* instead of *diadema* used by Fortunatus.

¹⁰⁷ In the Appendix I (braids), there are only 8 cases of gold foil-strip headbands found *in situ* from this period, mostly from Germany and Northern France, from the middle of the 7th century onwards. There are

In the case of veils (or other words in vulgar Latin or the vernacular languages representing Latin textual references to *vela* or *velamina*), the surviving remains are again associated with burial clothing. Although the material vestiges from the past are not as numerous as in the case of headbands and in no way do they form a full corpus for research, nevertheless they are worth looking at here, because they give us an idea of context: the remains of veils can be part of assemblages that preserve the whole attire, that is everything worn at a time on one individual. In this way the veil as an extract from a garment system takes on a corporeal and tangible sense.

An example to illustrate this, before going at length into the archaeology of headcoverings, is the case of the female burial of the possibly royal individual with the “Arnegundis” ring in Saint-Denis, dated to 580-90.¹⁰⁸ The preserved veil was buried with the body; the cloth seems to have been a kind of red satin, and it reached as far as the waist. The golden pins found in position on both sides of the veil, over the temples, were used to reveal voluminous earrings with the garnet polyhedric ornament of the usual Merovingian type.¹⁰⁹ Besides this long rectangular thick cloth, the woman wore two more garments, one of white silk and one of purple silk, that reached down her ankles. On top of that she had a dark red silk overtunic in thick samite¹¹⁰ cloth with long sleeves, which had heavily braided and embroidered borders with gold foil-strip. This over-tunic hardly reached down to her knees. It was open at the front, like a coat and closed with two disc-brooches which functioned as buttons. The system was completed by a woollen cloak, soft leather shoes, silk leggings, cross-garters and their buckles, and a leather belt. A very heavy gilded buckle with a buckle-plate was deposited on the upper part of the body, a little over the waist. In this burial costume, the stress was multifocal: we do not know if the large plate buckle and counterplate were actually worn in real life at the waist by this woman, keeping in place at least three layers of tunics and the coat, or if they were only deposited over the overcoat. If it was worn, it was the most visible feature, followed by

other kinds of headdress however to be employed after this period and there is always the problem of objects made of perishable materials that cannot be assessed, but which certainly didn't have gold or gems.

¹⁰⁸ Perin P., “Pour une révision de la datation de la tombe d’ Arégonde, épouse de Clotaire Ier, découverte en 1959 dans la basilique de Saint-Denis,” *Archéologie médiévale* 21, (1991), pp. 21-40 and Fleury M., “Bijoux et parures mérovingiens de la reine Arégonde, belle-fille de Clovis, découverts à Saint-Denis,” *Les dossiers de l’ archéologie*, n° 32 (janv- fevr 1979).

¹⁰⁹ See fig 2.2.

¹¹⁰ See Textile Terms and Procedures , Appendix III “ Patterns of weaves”.

the long red headveil. If it was not, then the long heavy veil created a strong visual effect: it was worn higher on the body and could be seen immediately from a distance, covered a part of the clothing because it was long, ample and heavy and conveyed the most information about the social situation of the woman. Emphasis was also put on the cuffs of the sleeves, although the decoration was not a functional part which could have articulated the ensemble. If we can generalise from this case, since it is exceptionally well-preserved, the element of the long dark and heavy veil would have been integral to the vestimentary system of the Frankish aristocracy - perhaps even royalty - in the 580s.

This may also very possibly be the case in a number of Kentish burials, including the above mentioned cases of Mill Hill, Deal and Holywell Row ¹¹¹ from the mid-5th and 6th century. ¹¹² The garment systems there are not preserved in their entirety as in the “Arnegundis” individual, but there, as well as in the case of the woman buried under Cologne Cathedral, ¹¹³ which I am about to discuss, there is sufficient evidence from mineralised fibres from different textiles preserved on metallic dress accessories.

In 1959, a female burial was found in a wooden coffin inside a stone chamber under the choir of the cathedral of Cologne, dated to the first half of the 6th century. ¹¹⁴ It is not the great number of finds in this burial but the specific information about headdresses that draws our attention to the example. Four different types of gold foil strip braids were found in position. One braid of gold wire was of the exceptional length of 45 cm with a pendant garnet, and was found across the forehead encircling the entire skull. ¹¹⁵ Several pieces from gold threads from two different braids of differing length

¹¹¹ See notes 100, 101 and fig 4.

¹¹² See in the Appendix I Anglo-Saxon archaeological sources (braids), in the cases : from n° 2 to n° 19, and n° 21 of the Kentish burials. Nevertheless very little evidence of the textile remains on the braid and we can reconstruct the headwear with the band and the veil only in the cases when the brooch near the neck has preserved fibres that are different to the materials preserved replaced on the buckle or other metallic objects. This is very clearly the case in the Appendix I, Anglo-Saxon archaeological material (braids), n° 7, Chatham Lines, in the Appendix II, Anglo-Saxon sites, as in Mucking, Graves 622, 843, Sewerby, Yorks, Grave 19. Also see Walton- Rogers, op. cit. note 87, Blewburton, Berks, Grave 11, pp. 147, 87, and also Cook, op.cit., note 77, Orpington, Graves 44, 58, pp. 123-124.

¹¹³ See note 77, Doppelfeld, op.cit., pp. 89-113 and also idem, “Die Domgrabung XI. Das fränkische Frauengrab,” *Kölner Domblatt* 4 (1959), pp. 41-111, see also Appendix I (Alammanic, Bavarian, Thuringian braids) n° 7.

¹¹⁴ See fig 2.5ab.

¹¹⁵ This is the longest gold foil strip braid found in one piece in early medieval Europe so far. See Appendix I: Frankish burials: n° 5 Envermeu, Seine Maritime, grave 1, length of braid: 18-19 cm, 2nd half of the 6th century. In the Alamannic burials: (which in general are of an exceptional length): n° 1 Wonsheim, Alzey, Rheinhessen, grave unknown, length of braid: 37 cm, around end of 6th - early 7th century; n° 4 Köln, St-

and weave were also found by the feet, behind the knees, as if from the garters and the hem of a dress or a long veil; this position is similar to that found at Mill Hill. Remains of six different textiles in a variety of locally produced composite weaves were also preserved on the back of the metalwork.¹¹⁶ Gold threads were found from the border of a rectangular woollen coarse tabby cloth (a mantle or a coverlet) in a wooden casket. Gold and garnet earrings were found *in situ*, but there was no long pin on the chest, or shorter hairpins around the head, unlike the case of the Arnegundis individual, who did not wear a headband. The lady of Cologne cathedral wore three necklaces and a chain with pendant coins. A pair of small rosette brooches were found on the right and left of the headwear, comprising of the earrings and the headband. The rosette brooches appear to have been in direct association with the chain at the neck, as if this was hung between them.¹¹⁷ A pair of long bow-headed brooches were found one over the other, almost vertically near the small gold belt buckle. It is possible that the rosette brooches were used to catch the veil at the sides of the neck and that the long bow-headed brooches closed an front-opened tunic or overcoat. Although most of the textiles have perished, the position and orientation of the metalwork indicate that the woman wore a long veil with a headband, caught with two rosette brooches at the neck, an front-opening garment fastened with two gold bow-head brooches above the belt-buckle, a leather belt, a chatelaine with its hangings, leather shoes with silver-gilt shoe-buckles and tags, and the above-mentioned braid garters and their garnet silver cloisonné tags. We do not know if the dress had sleeves and if this was short, so as to show off the garters and the shoes, as in the case of the Arnegundis individual. What we can tell, however, is that in all probability a very elaborate long headband with a central pendant kept in place a very long ornate veil, caught at the neck with brooches and the jewellery. The stress in this dress system was also multifocal: apart from the great number of belt hangings that

Severinus, grave 73, length of braid: 25, 7 cm; in the late 6th century Anglo-Saxon burials: (Kent, actually): n° 2 Bifrons, grave 21, length of braid: 18 cm, middle of 6th century, n° 3 Bifrons, grave 29, length of braid: 25 cm, middle 6th century, n° 6 Bifrons, graves 41, 51, 64, (two braids stored without indication), length of braids: 20.5 cm and 24.5 cm dated in the middle of 6th century; n° 14 Lyminge, a “Jutish” burial, a female grave, length of braid: 34 cm in total; middle of 6th century, n° 17 Sarre, grave 94/1866, total length represented: 25 cm dated to the middle of the 6th century. Compare with dimensions of foil, see supra note 104.

¹¹⁶ See Bender-Jørgensen L., *North European Textiles until AD. 1000*, (Aarhus, 1992), p. 241.

¹¹⁷ See fig 2.5ab.

would probably have spread around the skirt of the belted garment and have caught the attention, the striking headband, and the veil that encircled the person, would be here at least, equally the focus of attention and signification, especially when observed from a distance.

We may not have an entire vestimentary system in the above cases, but there is enough comparative information about specific dress items to fill in the missing parts of the archaeological textiles by analogy to the textile fibres that we have. These examples serve to contextualize the vestimentary part, the headveil, and the headgear under examination here, and we can place it into the framework of the clothing system in each case in order to understand its functions and the differences of its morphology before we examine its meaning. The evidence from south-eastern Anglo-Saxon England from this period points towards the use of a separate piece of usually fine cloth, that fell in folds, covered the head and was fastened in various ways, and this was usually preserved at the back of the brooches that kept the cloth in place.¹¹⁸ This is evident in the example from Mucking, Essex, cemetery II, in female grave 843.¹¹⁹ The textile remains at the back of the two brooches could have belonged to a head-veil tucked under the brooches to keep it in position. A similar example, from female grave 17 at Blewburton Hill, Berkshire¹²⁰ shows that the position of the brooches on the chest of the body prohibited the possibility that they fastened a *peplos* type garment, a tubular overdress caught at the shoulders and worn in this period in most of Anglo-Saxon England, as there was a quantity of finer linen fabric which probably fastened a head-veil between a tablet-woven braid at the upper edge of the dress and the brooch. Saucer brooches served as fasteners of a veil, but sometimes a double pin was the fashion, as is attested in Kent in the late 6th century and the beginning of the 7th.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ This bit of textile can be argued that it was the cloth of the cloak (see Cook A.M., *The Evidence for the reconstruction of Female Costume in the Early Anglo-Saxon Period in the South of England*, Unpublished MA Thesis, (The University of Birmingham, 1974), esp. at the conclusion).

¹¹⁹ See Appendix II, Anglo-Saxon sites.

¹²⁰ See Walter-Rogers, op.cit., note 87, pp. 56, 87 and Appendix II, Anglo-Saxon sites, the example from Sewerby, Grave 19.

¹²¹ As in Finglesham, Grave 203, Appendix II Anglo-Saxon England, Kentish sites, see Crowfoot E., "notes", in Chadwick S., "The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Finglesham, Kent, a reconsideration," *Medieval Archaeology* 2 (1958), pp. 36-37; the group of two pins and a fine chain, forming a three-piece "pin-suit" fastened the linen twill fabric under the throat. The same fashion seems to have been popular in Roundway Down, Wiltshire, Little Hampton Worcestershire, and a late copper-alloy example from Fishergate, York

More evidence for veils has been preserved in Anglo-Saxon burials than in Frankish contexts, due to better preservation conditions, with the exception of the above mentioned élite burials in Cologne, Saint-Denis, Perusson and one earlier instance, of the late 5th century in Saint-Victor, Marseille, discussed below, which preserves a silk tunic, mantle and a silk open-weave short veil.¹²² Scanty evidence for linen veils exists in a cemetery in the Lorraine region¹²³ and another in the Pyrénées discussed below.¹²⁴ Lightweight linen or open-weave net-like wool tabby¹²⁵ fabrics on the front of brooches on the shoulders, in vertical folds, sometimes gathered with a thread, have been evidenced in several 6th century instances in West Heslerton burials (graves 78, 143), in Scorton (graves 18, 31, 80, 98, 112), and in Wakerley, grave 80.¹²⁶ All in all, there are 10 examples from Saxon sites, 57 in Anglian sites and 22 in the rest of Anglo-Saxon England.¹²⁷ Among these, there are late 6th-century cases mostly from Kent, where the veil was edged by gold braids running down the sides of the face and neck and reaching the shoulders (Dover Buckland I, graves 391B, 354), which suggests that some women in some areas, including in Kent, wore longer veils.¹²⁸ In the later 6th and early 7th century, pleats and folds appear more often, gathered with a thread, creating a pleated effect (as in West Heslerton, grave 78, Scorton graves 18, 80, Dover Buckland II, grave 250, and others),¹²⁹ and the evidence for veils preserved on the girdle groups suggests that the veil was worn longer, reaching below the waist, sometimes with special staples or small rings

see Owen-Crocker G., *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2003), see “the Byzantine fashion”, esp. pp. 141-142. (The term “pin-suit” is coined in ibidem). It is around the 7th century or the middle of 7th century that we have most evidence for such linen veils of a certain length in England.

¹²² Boyer R., et alii, *Vie et mort à Marseille à la fin de l’ Antiquité. Inhumations habillées des Ve et VIe siècles et sarcophage reliquaire trouvés à l’ abbaye de Saint- Victor*, L’ Atelier du Patrimoine, (Marseille, 1990), pp. 45-92 and see Appendix I (braids), n° 29 and n° 30 and Appendix II (Frankish sources, Aquitaine, Provence, Languedoc sites). For the textiles analysis, see Bender- Jørgensen, op.cit., note 116, p. 111, and see fig 2.6.

¹²³ See Chapter 3, section 3.9 Regional features of belts and of associated fabrics and dress, pp. 276-283.

¹²⁴ See Chapter 3, section 3.9, pp. 285-288.

¹²⁵ See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures “Weave patterns”.

¹²⁶ Walton-Rogers P., *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England*, (York, 2007), pp. 157-159, and Appendix II.

¹²⁷ Ibidem, p. 157.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, p. 158.

¹²⁹ Ibidem, pp. 158-159, Hartford Farm, Norfolk, graves 1, 19, 22, 28, Ipswich Buttermarket, Suffolk, graves n° 2962, n° 4275.

worn at the temples, reminding one of the pins at the veil of the Arnegundis individual (Holywell Row, grave 37).¹³⁰

Another very important element in the evidence for veils from non-élite burials in Anglo-Saxon England is that it has been possible to identify two important factors in the final appearance of this textile: the materials used and one special type of weave, and also dyes. Most of the Anglo-Saxon veils discussed above were made of bleached gauzy or closely woven linen of tabby weave,¹³¹ finer than the other textiles in the assemblages. There is also a special net-like open tabby weave identified as *Schleiergeweber* which is made of wool¹³² and is encountered in Scandinavia and Northern Germany and found in four examples from North Yorkshire and one from Kent.¹³³ This in one instance is dyed deep blue-black (Scorton, grave 112).¹³⁴ The headdress from West Heslerton, grave 123,¹³⁵ is a simple woolen tabby but was dyed dark red and a tablet-woven braid was found running across the temple and over the ear, because a brooch had fallen against the side of the woman's head.¹³⁶ All known samples of Anglo-Saxon dyed fabrics consist of 60 specimens, which are usually coloured yarn braids, bags, accessories, or embroidery, so it seems that many textiles in Anglo-Saxon England were worn in natural fleece colours.¹³⁷ These elements of dyes and weaves, even if the evidence is scanty, underline the visual, and structural importance of the veil in a dress system.

In the above mentioned Frankish and Anglo-Saxon burials, the presence of a veil is indisputable. It can be made of silk and be long enough to cover the shoulders, as in the

¹³⁰ As found also in other Later Phase Burials of the 7th century, like the ones at Castledyke, grave 160, Buckland II, grave 413, Finglesham, grave 57, where a pair of small annular brooches were found by the woman's temples, Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 87, p. 159, and see Appendix II.

¹³¹ See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures.

¹³² This was found originally in 7th -8th century contexts in Hessens, Leens, (Walton-Rogers, p. 68), the cemetery at Haithabu (Hägg I., *Textilfunde aus der Siedlung und aus den Gräbern von Haithabu, Beschreibung und Gliederung*, (Neumünster, 1991), pp. 230-231), and Dublin of the Viking period (Heckett E., "Some Hiberno-Norse headcoverings from Fishamble Street and St John's Lane, Dublin," *Textile History* 18 (2) (1987), 159-173; and in two instances in Anglo- Scandinavian York (Walton-Rogers, "The Textiles" in www.iadb.co.uk /waterstones).

¹³³ See Walton-Rogers, pp. 67-69, as found in 6th century Scorton, graves 31, 98, 112, West Heslerton, grave 143 and as a sash in 7th century Dover Buckland II, grave 353, on the technical characteristics of this textile type see Appendix III, and the contexts in Appendix II, Anglian sites and Appendix II, Kentish Sites.

¹³⁴ Ibidem, op.cit., note 87, pp. 67, 157.

¹³⁵ Ibidem, p. 157 and see fig 2.3.

¹³⁶ The dye was identified as purpurin extracted from *Galium verum* L., ladies' bedstraw, See Appendix III Textile Terms and Procedures, "Dyeing".

¹³⁷ See Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 87, pp. 62-64.

Late-Roman example of the burial at Saint-Victor, Marseille¹³⁸ from the Christian Mediterranean of the late 5th century. It can be long enough to reach down to the knees and made by a heavy fabric, as with the dark red velvet veil of the late 6th-century Arnegundis individual. It can be made of linen in its natural colour, long enough to cover the chest, worn in ample folds and pleats, or of dark blue or red wool of a specialised weave type, as attested at the back of the brooches in Anglo-Saxon burials of the 7th century. Finally, in the cases where no archaeological textile has been preserved, the presence of gold foil strip decoration can at times, according to the context and the form and function of the evidence in position, serve as a criterion for the possibility of a headcovering. When this is so, the veil can be very long, fine and ornate with embroidery and golden braids interwoven, or stitched around the edges, or with appliqué decoration of isolated motifs as in a few examples from Kent (Lyminge¹³⁹ and Mill Hill, Deal¹⁴⁰), possibly dated to the third quarter of the 6th century, at Cologne Cathedral, in the late 6th century and in a number of cases in Lombard Italy between the 6th and the late 7th century.¹⁴¹ All things considered, it seems that there is more material evidence for veils in the Christian Mediterranean by the 5th century, and in Francia after the middle of the 6th; and their use is accentuated everywhere in early medieval Europe after the 7th century.¹⁴²

Headbands and veils, whether worn in conjunction with each other or with other elements or worn on their own, are attested in diverse material and textual evidence. In

¹³⁸ Boyer R, *et alii*, op. cit., note 122, pp. 45-92 and p. 111, and see Appendix I (braids), n° 29 and n° 30 and Appendix II, (Frankish sources, Aquitaine, Provence, Languedoc sites).

¹³⁹ See Appendix I, (Anglo-Saxon braids), n° 14, a 'Jutish' grave and compare with n° 21.

¹⁴⁰ See fig 2. 4 of the plan of Mill Hill Grave 105C, see note 100, and n° 21, Appendix I.

¹⁴¹ See Appendix I, Longobardic burials, n° 3 at Mombello Monferrato, an embroidered veil used to wrap a child burial dated at the beginning of the 7th century; n° 9, at Rivoli, where gold foil was found under the skull and the sides of the chest of the female burial 41, interpreted as a veil decorated with golden foil appliqué decoration; n° 10 at Rivoli, grave 63, where gold foil was found around the skull and the jaw, probably from an embroidered veil or a funerary cap; n° 34, and n° 35 from female graves 3 and 17 at Nocera Umbra at the end of the 6th -the beginning of the 7th century; n° 36, the female grave 57 of a little girl at Arezzo, Colle del Pionta, which bears evidence for the decoration of an elaborate veil, having an interwoven netting and gold bands, dated at the first half of the 7th century; n° 40, In Rutigliano, Bari, grave 40 of the early 7th century of a woman wearing a gold embroidered veil whose foil strips were wound around cotton or silk fibres.

¹⁴² For a discussion of the possibilities of an introduction of a Christian Mediterranean vestimentary system in the 7th century, see Magoula O., "The Introduction of a Byzantine vestimentary system in Merovingian Francia? the evidence of archaeology," English Summary, *Proceedings of the 27th symposium of Byzantine Archaeology and Art, Byzantine and Christian Museum 11-12.5.2007*, (Athens, 2007), pp. 64-65.

fact, in the three Longobardic female burials from Kranji, and in those from Pry, Namur, from Stowting, Kent, from Chessel Down, Isle of Wight, and in two cases from Saint-Severin in Cologne,¹⁴³ a list which is not exhaustive, there is evidence that one or two or even three hairpins made of silver, bronze or (less often) gold were used at the back of the head or on the temples, with a headband. These hairpins are too delicately made to play a functional part in the hairdo, but fine enough to be ornamental or to keep a piece of fabric in place. The presence of this accessory may be a further criterion, alongside the gold foil strip, the embroidery or the braids of a perished fabric, to support the possibility of a perished veil.

Archaeological sources of the period of the furnished burials, in both urban and rural cemeteries, attest to a variety of alternatives of headwear for all social strata. Headbands and veils can be examined within the context of other forms of headwear,¹⁴⁴ so that their function and perhaps their meaning within a clothing system can be evaluated. We will argue that the material can supply us with enough evidence to propose typologies of headbands, different sorts of coifs and veils, and different ways to wear them. The reason why a coif seemed to have been used, or why it was introduced in some localities in the first place, by whom it was worn and how and the stylistic message the people of the early middle ages tried to express in this, will be approached in the next section, dealing with the material evidence of headwear in different localities.

It is important here, however, to add that local differences in costume can also be traced in elusive details, for example the use of hairpins to draw back the veil to allow the earrings to be seen, which can be found among some Frankish women - at least in their burial costume.¹⁴⁵ Such earrings were not seen as part of the headdress, even when hairpins were found in position, in Anglo-Saxon burials of the same time-period. Very few earrings have indeed been found in Anglo-Saxon contexts, and in some cases these were worn not on the ears or found around the skull, but, rather as central pieces in

¹⁴³ See Appendix I, (Longobardic braids) n° 42, 43, 44, (Frankish braids) n° 4, (Anglo-Saxon braids) n° 18, 19, (Bavarian braids) n° 4, 6.

¹⁴⁴ This means that these two extracts from the clothing system will be approached horizontally within the context of a syntagmatic unit of headgear.

¹⁴⁵ This is very much the case in the individual with the Arnegundis ring, see pp. 94-95 and note 108, Appendix I, n° 15. Earrings are usual among élite Frankish burials, in the North-West, the Centre, the Midi and in Alamannic and Bavarian graves see Appendix I and II (Frankish sources, Austrasia and Rheinland, Neustrian and Upper-Loire, Centre, Burgundian sites).

festoons of beads or chains.¹⁴⁶ There is also very little textual evidence for earrings anywhere in northern Europe to compare with the example of Agnellus for the women of Ravenna mentioned above.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, there is evidence for earrings for most social strata in Italian graves of the period.¹⁴⁸ This is clearly a sign of local dress custom and it reminds us that the main elements of a vestimentary system are not the only ones that differentiated different regions. But we cannot reconstruct most of these details, and in what follows I will concentrate, as before, on headwear.

2. 6 A brief study on the semantics of distinction based on the material evidence of Frankish womens' headwear in life and in death

What do the sources attest about variations in the use of the veil? It is very interesting that in one instance, the Thuringian princess Radegundis is said to have been wearing her veil or *mafortis* "in the way of the barbarians", in a very vague description of what was perhaps the Thuringian manner of headwear in Fortunatus' Life.¹⁴⁹

...Whenever she wore a new linen headscarf, like a covering, decked with gold and jewels after the barbarian's custom, and was praised by the young girls of her entourage for being

¹⁴⁶ The suggestion that Anglo-Saxon women did not wear their earrings but as central pieces in their necklaces was made by Sonia Chadwick-Hawkes, included in the discussion of the veil in Owen-Crocker G., op.cit., note 101, pp. 96-101. This suggestion leaves room for a local or ethnic use of costume with the brooch or the pin that fastened the veil under the chin. Pairs of earrings are yet to be found from Anglo-Saxon contexts of the period under discussion.

¹⁴⁷ See supra p. 76 text and see note 45. Earrings appear regularly in Italian material, especially later, there are numerous 11th century attestations; See Ditchfield P., *La Culture matérielle Médiévale. L' Italie Méridionale Byzantine et Normande*, Collection de l' École Française de Rome 373, (Rome, 2007), esp. the chapters on: Coifs et ornements capillaires, and: Les Bijoux, La passementerie, pp. 146-223.

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix I, (Longobardic braids) n° 18, Cividale, n° 44 Kranji, and graves in Nocera Umbra, n° 33, 34. (Pasqui- Paribeni R., "Necropoli Longobarda di Nocera Umbra," *Monumenti Antichi dei Lincei* XXV (1918), pp. 138-352), Castel Trosino, several graves, (Mengarelli R., "La necropoli barbarica di Castel Trosino," *Monumenti Antichi dei Lincei* XII (1902), pp. 146-335), Collegno, two graves, Pejrani Baricco L., "Dal tessuto all' abito: moda e acconciatura in età longobarda", in Pejrani Baricco L., (ed.), *Presenze Longobarde. Collegno nell' alto medioevo*, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Piemonte, (Torino, 2004), p. 167-174.

¹⁴⁹ Fortunatus, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, 9, 5f, pp. 368, See latin text in note 59. This is based on the translation of Petersen J.M., (ed. and trans.), in *Handmaids of the Lord. Contemporary descriptions of female asceticism in the first six Christian centuries*, Cistersian Studies Series 143, (Kalamazoo, 1996), p. 385.

very beautiful, she would judge herself unworthy to be adorned with such a kind of veil¹⁵⁰ and soon divested herself of this clothing. She would arrange that it be taken to whatever church church was nearest and laid over the holy altar for a covering.

This is a very rare case of textual evidence about the ethnic varieties of headdress decoration, and possibly of local costume, that are attested in the source material, which may have a correspondence to the headwear from the mortuary record at the time of the furnished burials. The author is however not precise or informative on the veil or its decoration of gold and gems.¹⁵¹ What we can say about the secular headwear of the saint is that the words *mafortis* and *linteolum* are used here instead of *velum*. Later in the Life,¹⁵² the term to describe her secular headgear is *cofia*, which is very rare. Perhaps there are subtle nuances of difference in the signification: perhaps a *linteolum* and also the *maforte*, is a longer veil and does not refer to the whole system that forms a headdress, pins, ribbons, underveils, fillets¹⁵³ whereas a *cofia*¹⁵⁴ refers to the ensemble, the whole system of the coif, veil, pins, headwear jewellery; but it seems equally probable that this variety of terms served here to eliminate the author's fear of repetition. However, even in this case, the evidence points only to élite local headwear.

The archaeological evidence of preserved textiles and their metalwork correlates, from female burials of various social registers, will be examined here. We cannot, when using this approach, separate dress from the construction of social identities. Categories of distinction in dress, and in headwear in particular, express the constructions¹⁵⁵ of

¹⁵⁰ “*Linteolum*” in the original, means a piece of cloth according to Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v. it is a usual term for a headveil according to Isidorus of Seville as well as the term “*maforte*” (see notes 72, 79) and it is a very usual term for a veil or a long sheet of fabric or a shroud in the 7th and 8th century Saint's Lives e.g. in *Vita Corbiniani*, (MGH) *Scr rer Merov* 6, p. 260, in two instances, found in conjunction to “*sindonem linteis*”. Probably it denotes a long veil. Compare with the “*savanum*” from the same passage in *Vita Radegundis* above, note 59, also also a cloth, or a shawl in Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v.

¹⁵¹ From what we know from the material record of headgear in late 6th century Francia, this could take a variety of forms: headband with suspended gems, a diadem, embroidery with gems, interwoven bands of gold with suspended gems or other.

¹⁵² See note 43.

¹⁵³ We will return to the function and the meaning of the different terms for headwear in the concluding section of this Chapter: 2.7 The history of: *vitta* and *velum* on a time-line.

¹⁵⁴ *Cofia* or *cofea* according to Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v., i.e. headcovering.

¹⁵⁵ As Foucault had pointed out in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, M., *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris, 1969), intro vi-viii: “Language does not simply reflect the world as it is; it is a medium of

gender, status, position in the life-cycle, regional and ethnic differences, and the symbolic expressions of death, of secularity and religiosity in costume. These constructions are socio-cultural and symbolic, and cannot be seen separately from their social contexts of power and politics.¹⁵⁶ They also must have been dynamic and changeable. One of the reasons why modern iconographical reconstructions of dress of the period of the furnished burials fail to communicate visually the different levels of information about dress and social identities, is that they picture an inactive use of material culture. It is as if the Franks, men and women, experienced an immutable social reality,¹⁵⁷ conforming automatically to self-conscious practices such as ethnic strategies, or to the dictates of rituals, values and traditions.

Undoubtedly, the selection of the elements of dress in an outfit according to a certain style signifies a number of the above components of an identity, and not just ethnic ones: nevertheless, the Franks, Burgundians and Alamans were different, sometimes without knowing it.¹⁵⁸ An understanding of the use of headwear in all its known varieties, and of the meanings ascribed to it, will be approached via the data from the areas that correspond geographically to the Merovingian kingdoms of Burgundy, Austrasia and Neustria - although there are great differences in the homogeneity of burial practices within these areas and in the quality and quantity of the published evidence.¹⁵⁹

construction.” Dress, a form of language in itself, expresses in its own codes, constructs and deconstructs social realities.

¹⁵⁶ For a discussion on ethnosymbolism and a critique on its use and the ways material culture serves as a marker of social and ethnic identity, Pohl W., “The construction of communities and the persistence of a paradox: an introduction”, in Corradini R., Diesenberger M., Reimitz H., (eds.), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages. Texts, Resources and Artefacts, The Transformation of the Roman World* 12, (Brill, 2003), pp. 1-16.

¹⁵⁷ The use of distinct dress could be a medium of negotiation between social strata and different ethnic communities in a way that had more to do with everyday living practice which can express both deliberate and unconscious actions. (See for this term Geary P., *The Myth of Nations. The Medieval Origins of Europe*, (Princeton and Oxford, 2003), esp. Chapt. 3, Barbarians and Other Romans, pp. 93-120). Distinct burial customs or regional food preparations, appearing on a day to day basis in anthropological parallels can serve as indicators of an ethnic or regional identity more than material culture. We cannot propose that someone is of germanic origins just because someone is dressed in the way of the Germans. This approach can help us escape the straightjacket of a stereotypical “regional costume” and leaves room for change and variety in the course of a history of regional communities.

¹⁵⁸ See on habitus and material culture choices, Curta, F., “Some remarks on Ethnicity in Medieval archaeology,” *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2) (2007), pp. 159-185.

¹⁵⁹ The material evidence derives from row-grave cemeteries, “open-field” and parochial burials from churches and basilicas scattered across Burgundy, North-west Gaul, the Ardennes-Moselle region, the *sarcophagi*, pits, *tegulae* -covered burials from the Centre and the South, the Seine and the Loire basins, the South-West of Francia that, despite their morphological variety, give a picture of most social registers

Additionally, I will make an effort to include the scanty material at the limits of the Merovingian kingdoms pertaining to headwear, via an analysis of the similarities between the practices and the regional features of artefactual representation of the North, comprising Austrasia, Neustria and Burgundy, and the South, Aquitaine, Provence and Languedoc. The term “Merovingian” is employed here as the characterization of the overall Frankish polity embracing several regional identities, in the period of the furnished burials. When looking into the possibilities of signification and social messaging in the burial costume across such a geographical range and time span, a researcher should steer clear from labelling something as Burgundian, Austrasian, Gallo-Roman, pagan or Christian unless all evidence points in that direction.

A further distinction should be drawn here between clothes which could have been worn in life, and specifically burial headgear, as when textiles like the surviving traces of a *sudarium*¹⁶⁰ seem to have been used around the head of a deceased. A *sudarium* was a headband that kept the jaw in place, and it could accompany a shroud at times; it could also be found in the context of a dressed burial. It is generally attested by a small pin, made of bronze or silver, or by a hook, or else by twin perforated pins connected with a small chain. This latter clip was usually found near the first two vertebrae, as in Annecy-Boutae¹⁶¹ and in most burial contexts was designed so as not to

represented in these rural and urban communities and share a number of features in terms of headwear accoutrements found in some of the female burials, see Périn P., “Des nécropoles romaines tardives aux nécropoles du Haut-Moyen Âge. Remarques sur la topographie funéraire en Gaule mérovingienne et sa périphérie,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 35 (1978), pp. 9-30, also Young B.K., Périn P., “Les Nécropoles (IIe- VIIIe siècles)”, in Duval N. et alii, (eds.), *Atlas Archéologique de la France: Naissance des Arts Chrétiens. Atlas des monuments paleochrétiens de la France*, (Paris, 1991), pp. 91-121 and for more updated views and comparative material from the Centre and South see Godou Y., Colin G., “La christianisation des campagnes, IV-VIIIe siècles,” *Gallia Suppl.* 64 (2007), pp. 57-83.

¹⁶⁰ For more on the biblical origins and the use of this burial headband which was used to keep the jaws together, and its synonyms like the term *brandeum* which is found to be quite popular in most Saints’ Lives and Papal Letters: “*Romanis consuetudo non est, quanto sanctorum reliquias dant, ut quidnam tangere praesumant de corpore, sed tantummodo in pixide brandeum mittitur ut que ad sacratissima corpora ponitur, quod elevatum in ecclesia...reconditur*”. Gregorius Magnus, *Epp.* 4, 30, (MGH) *Epp* I, p. 265,14; also idem, *Homiliarum Liber secundus*, XXXII, PL 76, p. 176, “*Sudarium and linteamina*”; Hincmar of Rheims, *Vita Remigii*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 3, c. 25, p. 321, and p. 326 : “*Integrum, licet exsiccatum, corpus rubeo constat brandeo involutum*”, “*Et cum de ipso sepulchro in locello argenteo est transpositum, pars de ipso brandeo cum sudario quod fuerat super caput eius, assumpta in scriniolo eburneo, secus altare sanctae Mariae*”.

¹⁶¹ See Appendix II, (Frankish sources): Annecy-Boutae (Isère) in Burgundy, also clips like these were prominent among the finds in the 7th century Haute Savoie, Isère and Drôme in Burgundy : See Appendix II (Frankish sources) Saint-Julien-en-Genevois, Faverges, Saint Jean-Baptist, (Viuz-Faverges), Crotenay (Jura) to name only some among many cases. This clip, sometimes in the form of a twin pin suite as in

unfasten again.¹⁶² This finality points to the possibility of a burial bonnet or of a *sudarium*, rather than a hood which could have been worn in life.¹⁶³ However, even these clips, whose production is supposed to have had a specific burial use, especially in the course of the 7th century,¹⁶⁴ are among the everyday finds from 7th -century settlements and artisanal sites, as in Larina at Hières-sur-Amby (Isère)¹⁶⁵ as well as in the cemetery associated to Larina and in Crusailles¹⁶⁶ in the same region. It seems that a version of this delicate artefact, especially when it was of the type with small perforations for a chain or a cord, was used to pin a burial headband, in some regions, but also to keep everyday headwear in place as well. It is possible that in this case, both in Francia as well as in 7th-century Anglo-Saxon England, the line between burial and everyday headwear could be very thin.

Conversely, a veil, a cowl or a whole system of a mantle, a veil, ribbons¹⁶⁷ and metalwork accessories - such as any number of hairpins, ivory and bone combs, earrings,

Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire from a 7th century burial, is found in the 7th and 8th century Anglo-Saxon contexts as well: Flixborough, Barking Abbey, Lechlade, Castledyke, Southampton, see Owen-Crocker G., *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 141-143, and Ross S., *Dress pins from Anglo-Saxon England : their production and typo-chronological development*, Unpublished D.Phil thesis (University of Oxford, 1991), pp.147-149, 249-250.

¹⁶² This is one of the differences between the burial costume of a dressed two-dimensional dead body and the everyday dress, used in formal and informal occasions to clothe a conspicuous body on the move: The attention is drawn to the structural elements of dress on a basis of the different visual messaging and the two-dimensional perspective of a laid-out body, the comprehensive manner in which textiles and accessories signal the components of identities in public display.

¹⁶³ A hood as part of a dress system for women is very badly documented in the written sources of the time span of the furnished burials. There are however, some exceptional cases from Anglo-Saxon contexts like the textiles which probably came from a hood in Grave 74, Wakerley, Northamptonshire, of a woman aged between 35 and 45, from the beginnings of the 7th century, See Appendix II, and Sewerby, Grave 57, See Appendix II (Saxon and Anglon-Saxon sites and Anglian sites)

¹⁶⁴ According to Collardelle M., *Sépulture et traditions funéraires du V au XIIIe siècle ap. J.C. Dans les Campagnes des Alpes Françaises du Nord*, Société Alpine de documentation et de recherche en archéologie Historique, CNRS, (Grenoble, 1983), p. 48, p. 54, these pins appear in the late 5th century in the Drôme, (South Burgundy), to become very popular in the 7th century for a little while, and then to disappear altogether. However, these objects are very well attested in the central and north Burgundy (Savoie, Isère) in the course of the second half of the 7th and in the 8th century. (Ibidem, Interprétations, pp. 354-356, and see ibidem, fig 129, “Repartition des agrafes à double crochet et petits objets diverses”).

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 379. See Appendix II, (Frankish sources, Burgundian sites).

¹⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 315, Crusailles, “Le Noiret”, See Appendix II, (Frankish sources, Burgundian sites) in three cases, dated as Late Merovingian. Examples of such perforated clips, linked with a chain and found in association to the chin, from North Burgundy amount to more than 31 cases to count only the last phase of the cemetery of La Balme (Haute- Savoie). See Appendix II.

¹⁶⁷ See notes 206, 215, and pp. 116-119, Appendix II, (Frankish sources), figs 2.8a , 2.8b, 2.8c and in Laporte J.P., Boyer R., *Trésors De Chelles: Sépultures et reliques de la reine Balthilde (+ vers 680) et de l' abbesse Bertille (+ vers 704)*, Chelles: Société archéologique et Historique, (Chelles,1991), p. 14 on the headwear and hairdo.

nets with or without beads¹⁶⁸ and headbands, could be used both in and out of burial contexts. When fastened, it is possible that these could perform a different and more practical function in everyday life and in this way be a part of everyday dress in a region. This same system, of headwear with some alterations,¹⁶⁹ could fulfil the practical and symbolic requirements of the burial costume. Nevertheless, it seems that both in burial costume and perhaps in dress in real life there is a pronounced element of public display and, in the case of the burial costume, a sense of propriety and respect towards the dead woman.

It is difficult to draw conclusions about the regional cultural characteristics of artisanal production in areas like Burgundy or Aquitaine or Languedoc, where at first glance, there are no uniform practices in the deposit of the artefacts inscribed in the mortuary record. There is a great proportion of non-furnished burials in these areas throughout the late 5th to the 8th century. This is reflected in the quality of information we have about non-élite women's headwear elsewhere. In the North, comprising Austrasia and to an extent the less well-documented Neustria, however, there is notably more homogeneity in both the practices and the artefactual types of dress accessories and accordingly some evidence for headwear. There is a great contrast to the quality of evidence in Francia in comparison to what we know in Anglo-Saxon England about non-élite women's headwear, the yarn tablet woven braids, the veils and their colour, the changing fashions in their length and their forms.¹⁷⁰

The bone or ivory hairpins of the 4th-5th century, found in workshops, settlements and Gallo-Roman burial sites throughout Gaul and the rest of the late Roman world, were

¹⁶⁸ Mercier C., Mercier M., *Le cimetière Burgonde de Monnet-la-Ville*, Archéologie 25 (Series), (Paris, 1974), See Appendix II, (Frankish sources, Burgundian sites), Monnet-la-Ville, Jura, the female graves 87, 90, 92, three adjacent burials with evidence for very ornate composite glass beads "that could be part of netting containing the hair" according to the excavators, *ibidem*, p. 59, found under the skulls. A large iron hairpin kept the ensemble together in grave 90.

¹⁶⁹ See notes 129, 130-133, 139, 140. Representing the sense of belonging in a part of a community, a family, a religion perhaps, an ethnic tradition by being clothed in a prescribed way and most of all wearing possibly prescribed symbols of death, like shrouds, a piece of cloth over the face, unfastened clothes, flowers and herbs, grass, burial goods or special liquids with a symbolism-oil, wine, water in flasks at the head or the feet, etc see below Conclusion of this Chapter.

¹⁷⁰ This of course can be attributed to the better conditions of preservation. See pp. 97-99 and notes 129, 130, 131, 132, 133.

used to pin the hair- bun or the coiffure under the cloak which covered the head.¹⁷¹ This otherwise modest accessory provides some information about the headdress among certain middle layers of the provincial Gallo-Roman population, buried in pit burials and sarcophagi, dressed and shrouded.¹⁷² Some insight into their cultural attitudes can be assessed, these persisted to be influenced by late Roman vestimentary choices and accessories . We do not know if these influences extended beyond the insistence all over Gaul on this part of Roman headwear, consisting of a medium size pin with a female head on top,¹⁷³ and if this was worn with the *palla*, the cloak that covered the head, and the *maphorium*, a short veil, as in Italy, or if it was incorporated in another system of dress. In the same period large metalwork ensembles started to appear, mostly in the North of Gaul and sporadically in the rest of the regions; in all probability other types of headgear were worn in these parts, perhaps by women of different social strata than the wearers of these pins.

In Austrasia, around the middle of the 6th century, artefacts exclusively associated with women in the Metz area¹⁷⁴ as also in Normandy,¹⁷⁵ and to some extent in the rest of Neustria,¹⁷⁶ include a standard kit of jewellery including hairpins, bone combs and earrings in some cases, but in some of the sites this basic kit is enriched with variant artefact types that change from one community to the next.¹⁷⁷ In the upper Meuse area¹⁷⁸ in the 6th century, there is evidence for the use of combs under the skull, or found at the left or right temple, associated with long hairpins, worn at the back of the skull and

¹⁷¹ There are Late Roman depictions of this artefact in use in the coiffure and headwear of Late Roman ladies. Its use in the Eastern Roman empire was extended to the 8th century. (Among the usual finds in the 7th-8th century settlements in the Byzantine Mediterranean. (I unearthed one in an 8th century house in Elephtherna, Crete, last September). Workshops of these pins existed from the 3rd-6th century the well-studied cases in Escollives-Saint Camilles, St Denis workshop in Paris among many others. See Rodet-Bellarbi I., Van Ossel P., "Les épingles à tête anthropomorphe stylisée. Un accessoire de la coiffure féminine de l' Antiquité tardive," *Gallia* 60 (2003), pp. 319-368. See Appendix II, (Frankish sources), fig 2.7.

¹⁷² See Mercier, Mercier, op.cit., note 168, pp. 2-18, 12-26.

¹⁷³ See fig 7.

¹⁷⁴ See Appendix II (Frankish sources), Chaouilley, Lavoye, Dieu-sur- Meuse, Mazerny, Audun-le-Tiche, Ennery, Hayange, Toul.

¹⁷⁵ See Frénouville, Herouvillette (Appendix II).

¹⁷⁶ See Dolmen à Sublaines (Appendix II).

¹⁷⁷ Halsall G., "Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence," *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1) (1996), pp. 1-24, esp. pp. 6-9.

¹⁷⁸ See the sites mentioned in note 174 and compare them to sites such as Bislée, Bouzonville, Heudicourt, Neuville-sur-Escaut in Appendix II

possibly protruding over the ear, that can reach 10-15% in a cemetery. These are usually replaced by shorter hairpins and very frequently earrings in the 7th century. These artefacts can, however, be almost totally absent from neighbouring sites of the same period,¹⁷⁹ which is in itself evidence for micro-regional dress habits, fashions and vestimentary priorities, or for difficulties in procuring the artefacts.

Less than a third of the females in the open-field cemeteries of the 6th century in Austrasia and Neustria were accompanied with a bronze pin, more rarely silver, and/or a comb. When there is evidence for the age and sex of the skeletons, we are informed that most of these were between puberty and their forties.¹⁸⁰ This seems to have been a significant period in the concepts of the female life-cycle, and it could be linked with marriageability and reproduction. Could the pin have kept in place a veil for these group of women? Less than 6% of this group had two or three long bronze hairpins.¹⁸¹ About 2% of these women, one or two of the most well-furnished graves in a large cemetery, were buried with a number of smaller and longer pins, a very few of which retained oxydised cloth fibres. Could these belong to veils too?

Generally there are very few secure vestiges of veils in this region, apart from the case of Harmignies (Hainault), especially the 560-580 Phase III female graves 222, 239 and 257.¹⁸² The very fine open-spaced linen fragments cover the front of small round brooches, and buckle-plates at the back of which two other layers of clothing were worn.¹⁸³ In the same phase, the neighbouring grave 234 preserved the only golden braid in the vicinity, but no textile fibre was preserved, so we do not know if the privileged woman here wore a similar veil to the ones in the graves of these women who were of a different consequence, since they only wore one small brooch and a buckle. The veil could have covered at least the waist of the women. In one exceptional case of

¹⁷⁹ See Halsall, op.cit., pp. 17-24, note 177.

¹⁸⁰ See idem, note 179.

¹⁸¹ See note 174, the sites in Appendix II. Bone combs, earrings, long hair-pins accompanied only the well-furnished female burials in Roche-sur-Foron, and these were found under the skull, compare with the Burgundian sites, see Appendix II, (Frankish sources) Roche-sur-Foron, La Balme, see notes 164, 168.

¹⁸² Vanhaeke L., Verhecken-Lammens C., "Textile Pseudomorphs from a Merovingian Burial Ground at Harmignies, Belgium", in Pritchard F., Wild J.P., (eds.), *Northern Archaeological Textiles, Archaeological Textiles Symposium (NESAT VII)*, Oxford, (Oxford, 2005), pp. 22-28, esp. p. 24.

¹⁸³ Discussed in detail in Chapter 3, 3.9 Regional features of belts etc. pp. 283-284.

preservation in Varangéville,¹⁸⁴ in the Moselle area, in the early 7th century, a number of traces from simple tabby weave pleated and bleached linen textiles, from rather poorly furnished graves, and a few beads under some skulls¹⁸⁵ were preserved. These represent traces of linen veils in two varieties of loose and dense weave, worn by adult women mostly.

Generally there are very few vestiges of veils in Austrasia and Neustria apart from mid-6th-century Harmignies and early 7th-century Varangéville; but it is probable that, although veil fragments were not found with the long hairpins and combs of the 6th century - or indeed the shorter hairpins and earrings of the 7th - these could each be combined with a headveil, now lost, which was available to a substantial portion of the buried female population.

Bone and some bronze, iron and silver hairpins are found in late 5th burials in Burgundy, in Gallo-Roman sites that continue the tradition of the clothed and shrouded Gallo-Roman burials of the 4th and the 5th century.¹⁸⁶ Some cemeteries in the early 6th century show furnished burials with weapons, pottery and metalwork, different from the above, reaching about a quarter of the total. In these, there is some evidence for women's headwear. In the rest of the sites, the only find is usually a bronze double pin, which points to a shrouded burial, in the same period.¹⁸⁷

In the early and the mid-6th century in Monnet-la-Ville in Jura some long hairpins, bone combs and nets with beads¹⁸⁸ appear, worn at the back of the head, which are not found in the cemeteries of the immediate vicinity. Between the late 5th to the early 6th century, the bone or ivory hairpins of the late Roman type like the ones discussed above disappear in Burgundy, and long bronze or iron hairpins become more popular for a section of the women that could reach a quarter of the females in some sites.¹⁸⁹ The

¹⁸⁴ Salin E., France-Lanord A., "Traditions et arts mérovingiens. I. Le cimetière de Varangéville (Meurthe-et-Moselle)," *Gallia* 4 (1946), pp. 199-289, see Appendix II (Frankish sources). Discussed in detail in Chapter 3, section, 3.9. Regional features etc. pp. 276-279.

¹⁸⁵ See also Appendix II (Frankish sources) "Delle-sur-le-Marais" Giberville, Calvados, compare with the evidence for headveils from the same period from Anglo-Saxon burial sites, see notes 130-132.

¹⁸⁶ See note 168.

¹⁸⁷ See Appendix II, Burgundian sites, and Collardelle, op.cit., note 164.

¹⁸⁸ See Mercier, Mercier, op.cit., note 168, pp. 12-20.

¹⁸⁹ See the evidence from the sites in note 181.

hairpins of bronze or iron, whether longer or shorter, and the bone comb at the back of the hair, supply us with no clue of the burial hairdo;¹⁹⁰ but they are the most recurrent finds of headwear in most of the cemeteries in the North-West,¹⁹¹ North-East, Aquitaine, in Burgundy and the rest of northern Francia, throughout the 6th and 7th centuries. In the majority of the rest of the Burgundian sites, though, until the 8th century, only clips from shrouds or a hood were evidenced.

In the South, Languedoc and Provence, there is a continuation of the Gallo-Roman tradition of the clothed and shrouded burials of the 5th century, as we have seen. In the sarcophagus burial of a well-to-do young woman in Marseille, there is evidence for Gallo-Roman burial costume: the silken *palla* did not cover the hair, but was worn on the shoulders over a silk tunic. The head was covered with a short silk open-weave veil, reaching the shoulders. The head was wreathed, and a small golden cross was placed on the forehead of the woman.¹⁹² We do not have more evidence about burials like these, which form the majority of the southern sites. Nevertheless, there are sites that appear sporadically in the South, as in Lunel-Viel, where Merovingian-style fully furnished burials edge onto the Gallo-Roman cemetery. In these cases, a few hairpins and combs are attested, as in the North of Francia. By contrast, sites of the 6th century in Brittany, or in the Pyrenées like Estagel, yield very poor evidence of headwear,¹⁹³ and for a very restricted number of women. In Estagel, there is a possibility for veils, preserved in the abundant metalwork, but only one hairpin was found in the best-furnished female grave among 22 others, although these all contained earrings.¹⁹⁴ The emphasis in the Visigothic cemeteries in the Pyrenées is mostly directed to the buckle-plates instead.

It is probable that a substantial portion of Frankish women wore other head garments of perishable material. It is indeed possible that other headwear elements, like

¹⁹⁰ In the previous section we saw that any number of hairpins could be associated to a headband in elite burials and attest to the possibility of a veil. A burial hairdo could be a bun at the back of the head, and/or braided hair like the very long braids preserved at Chelles, see pp. 116-119.

¹⁹¹ See Appendix II, (Frankish sources), Lavoye, Dieue-sur-Meuse, Mazerny, Hordain, Vron (Somme), Frénouville, (Calvados).

¹⁹² See note 174.

¹⁹³ Lantier M.R., "Le cimetière wisigothique d' Estagel (fouilles de 1935 et 1936)," *Gallia* 7 (1949), pp. 55-80. This is one of the so-called Visigothic cemeteries in the Midi, compare in Appendix II (Frankish sources) with Petit-Bersac, Antonne, (both in Aquitaine), Plovenez-Porsay in Brittany and the Appendix II (Aquitaine, Provence Languedoc), Estagel, Teilhet, Tabariane, Laurens (Hérault).

¹⁹⁴ Discussed below in detail, in Chapter 3, section 3.9 Regional features etc, pp. 285-288.

systems of beads, or woven bands of perishable materials, were used instead of gold foil strip headbands by the élites and also by the other social strata of the localities. The fact that no wool yarn tablet-woven braids were recovered, unlike Anglo-Saxon England,¹⁹⁵ does not mean that the Franks, who also used this technique as the late 7th century girdles discussed below reveal,¹⁹⁶ could not have employed them as headbands. What we have are the hairpins, combs, probably nets with beads and the evidence for longer or shorter linen veils, probably worn in conjunction with a braid now lost..

Metallic and bone accessories of headwear can be guides to a brief survey of the vestiges of non-élite female headwear in Francia. The most usual type of headwear in the 6th century all over Francia may have been a veil, with or without a band and a hairpin. In Austrasia and Neustria, this could be a linen waist-length veil, which was probably pleated in the 7th century, with one to three pins and a comb for young women before marriage or during the first years of marriage. Older women could wear a pin and perhaps a veil too. The most well-to-do could wear the veil with a gold headband. In Burgundy, and the South we have no evidence for veils, but perhaps the late Roman traditions held fast and a short *maphorion* and *palla* could have been the norm, perhaps for portions of the population who wanted to emphasise their Christian beliefs or *Romanitas* in the late 5th century. For some parts of the population in the 6th and 7th century, pins, rarely combs and nets of perishable materials with glass beads could be worn. In Visigothic Languedoc, it is probable that a veil was worn, at least by the most well-to-do women, over a dress with many metallic elements, but without metallic accessories. There is no evidence for brocaded veils or caps in Francia as in Italy and Anglo-Saxon England, and there is no evidence for surviving colour in the scanty non-élite textile remains of headwear. The dissemination of these artefacts around Gaul, as we have seen, does not allow hypotheses of distinct ethnic groups using these. Personal choice and availability of material, as well as age and marital status at least in Northern Francia, decided on most of the above alternatives. It seems that the characteristics of local costume and especially of the artefacts that are suggestive of the symbolism of individual female objects for particular social strata (headgear, jewellery) were more pronounced and more variegated

¹⁹⁵ See notes 130-132.

¹⁹⁶ See Laporte, op.cit., note 167, p. 14 and discussion pp. 116, 119.

in some periods, as in the 6th century, the period of the accentuation of the use of the gold-brocaded band; and in some areas more than others. This probably denoted social competition, or social renegotiation of stylistic messaging and possibly social stress among this portion of society, as shown most of all in these female burials.¹⁹⁷ It can also suggest that the band around the head could bear the same symbolic significance, especially when worn over a veil, even when it was made of leather, wool or fabric. And this may be an indicator that the veils in Northern Francia and in Languedoc, where we have evidence for them, could be worn with bands too.

The wearing of gold-brocaded headbands is believed to have been originally a Frankish élite custom. Their subsequent wider distribution has been presented above. They can be found on bodies buried in plaster and stone sarcophagi, church burials, and also in earth pit graves,¹⁹⁸ where such a tradition exists from the late 5th until the late 7th century. These braids had a long survival outside Francia as well: into the 7th and even 8th century in the Alamannic and Bavarian tradition.¹⁹⁹ 70% of them were found in wooden chambers within or under churches, the rest in the central sections of cemeteries. Golden headbands, an emblematic artefact of status in the northern Frankish burials, are found in sarcophagi, in cemeterial basilicas, or parish churches from the 6th to the early 8th century. They have also been found further south, in Aquitaine (Réole),²⁰⁰ in the élite section of the cemetery. The élites in Francia intermarried regularly between regions, as we can see from their private documents (see below, Chapter 3, pp. 225-229). We know, for example, that a single powerful family could own land in places as distant as Valenciennes in Flanders and Marseille and the Pyrenées.²⁰¹ There could well have been a substantial interchange of local fashionable solutions;²⁰² artisanal production may

¹⁹⁷ See Halsall G., op. cit., pp. 1-24, esp. pp. 6-9, note 177.

¹⁹⁸ By custom or environmental necessity, fashion in display of status, in Francia, Kent, Isle of Wight.

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix I, Main finds of gold foil strips or braids associated with textiles in Alamannic, Bavarian, Thuringian funerary contexts.

²⁰⁰ Jamet L., Gautier M., "La Réole, Informations Archéologiques, Aquitaine," *Gallia* 29 (1971), p. 342, pls 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. See Appendix II (Frankish sources).

²⁰¹ See the introduction of Geary P.J., *The Aristocracy in Provence*, (Stuttgart, 1985).

²⁰² As in case of the burial of the lady in Perusson, in a central position in the parish church of St Pierre. See note 103. Most of her élite metalwork jewellery, the glass flask at her feet, had parallels in Northern France, (Lelong C., op.cit., note 103, pp. 219-231, suggesting intermarriage between powerful families of Neustria and the Touraine) although she wore silks probably locally produced but for her patterned-woven blue mantle which was probably Lombard or even Byzantine. See Bender Jørgensen L., *North European Textiles until AD 1000*, (Aarhus University Press, 1992), pp. 317-318.

have answered to fashion demands that do not seem to have been static. The surviving fillets are worn by élite females of all ages;²⁰³ high status seems to transcend limits imposed by gender and specific life-cycle events. Elements of symbolism in other social strata, as we saw previously, were expressed through headwear, at least in Austrasian regions. Based on this evidence, in the wider distribution and the local and temporal consistency of most of the evidence for headbands we have today, it is very probable that the golden headbands originated with the newly formed-élites of Francia in the course of the late 5th and the early 6th century.

It is possible that headbands worn in conjunction with jewellery were a further indicator of status. But the earrings we have seen so far, in Francia, in Italy, or in Anglo-Saxon England, suggest that local traditions and fashions played an important role for this artefact for most social strata.

Finally, for the late 7th and early 8th century, when furnished burials are very rare, there is evidence for the use of veils and headwear among the high aristocracy in the cases of the preserved relics of Saint Balthild who died in 680 and Abbess Bertille who died in 704, both in the monastery of Chelles²⁰⁴. We will try with this example to present how a reconstruction of a vestimentary system that was not found in position, unlike the Arnegundis individual and the Cologne burial cases, can be facilitated when we use the criteria used so far to process the information from the headwear of the furnished burials period.

These two cases do not reflect typical instances of monastic interment. Here, the objects were deposited and preserved as relics in a casket and each of them had attached authentication *scedulae*²⁰⁵ alongside the remains of two bodies and the hair of one of the

²⁰³ See Appendix I: the individuals can be young, adolescent, young adults, mature and old.

²⁰⁴ Laporte J.P., Boyer R., *Trésors De Chelles : Sépultures et reliques de la reine Balthilde (+ vers 680) et de l'abbesse Bertille (+ vers 704)*, Chelles : Société archéologique et Historique, (Chelles, 1991), pp. 22-34.

²⁰⁵ The authentication, comprising of small oblong pieces of parchment with the names of the relevant Saint written in ink. *Scedula* (or *caedula*, *schedula*, *sedula*, *sedola* sometimes in the bibliography) can be the slip, page, leaflet, or a codex, a charter, according to Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v. The authentication slips found in Chelles have been proved by the palaeographical enquiry of authenticity to have been attached to the larger of the Chelles textiles and they are copies of the 7th and 9th century originals from the most recent translations in 1533, (for other pieces in 1544 and 1635). See Laporte J.P., Boyer R., *Trésors De Chelles : Sépultures et reliques de la reine Balthilde (+ vers 680) et de l'abbesse Bertille (+ vers 704)*, Chelles : Société archéologique et Historique, (Chelles, 1991), pp. 22, 23, 24, 45.

women. A small portion of the garments were deposited later, in the translation of the bodies of the older church of Saint-George to the one newly built in 833, but the majority of the relics, especially the ones worn close to the bodies, carry the marks of human decomposition, so were presumably originally linked with the bodies.²⁰⁶ Three types of tablet woven braids are included in the ensemble. None of these was used as a headband, because they do not have the usual dimensions of headbands, the usual form, or any technical evidence that they were tied around a head²⁰⁷. The criteria used for the following reconstruction are the usual dimensions of an item²⁰⁸ (e.g. the average length of all existing braids),²⁰⁹ its context (its usual associations with certain objects, e.g. hair-pins and beads, or its position on the body, i.e. the adjacent contexts), and the morphological and functional properties of the item, as there is only a limited number of possible ways to wear or to hang something on a body. According to the above, what each one of the women wore, and what was put on them when they were first buried, can be reconstructed like this:

For Balhild, an individual of about 45 years,²¹⁰ who reigned as a Queen-regent but who never took monastic vows,²¹¹ there survived: a brown silk dress in a very fragmentary state, with what was in all probability a wide tablet-woven girdle at the waist

²⁰⁶ These are the mantle of Balhild, which carries the marks of her body and is very corrupt in the middle, vestiges of a silk tunic, a yellow silk samite piece of cloth c. 74 cm long corrupted right in the middle, found with Balhild's relics, the extant rags and the sleeves from the brown tunic of Bertille, whose bodice rotted away, all the three different types of the woollen braids rotten at places. See fig. 2.8ab.

²⁰⁷ See note 115 usual length of braids. One of the tablet-woven braids was 125 cm long, and 1.8 cm wide, with chevron decoration and preserved vestiges of a tablet woven border. The warp was of yellow silk over white linen, probably a girdle. Another was preserved in 7 pieces, which were 4 cm wide and 135 cm long and preserved stitched support onto the hem of another fabric, probably from the hem of the dress of Bertille-this and the previous were found in the bundle of clothes and bones identified by the *scedula*. A third was a very elaborate composite braid, preserved in two pieces which had been probably too wide to have been a headband (4 cm), but even if this was so, there was no evidence of how this excellently preserved band was tied up. It could equally have been a braid used to decorate the tunic or a very attractive girdle, and it was found in the bundle of Balhild's bones and fabrics. See fig. 2.9abc.

²⁰⁸ More dimensions of the rest of the textiles in the ensemble are provided in Chapter 3, and in the Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures.

²⁰⁹ See note 115.

²¹⁰ According to the paleostopathological analysis of the remains, Laporte, Boyer, op. cit., note 205, p. 23.

²¹¹ According to her two biographers, the nun Baudonivia, *Vita Balhildis* A (c. 680) and the unknown author of the *Vita Balhildis* B, (*MGH*), *Scr rer Merov* 2, Krusch, B.(ed.), (Hannover, 1888), both Lives on pp. 482-508 and the *Ex Translatione s. Baltechildis*, Holder-Egger O., (ed.), (*MGH*) SS 15.1, (Hannover, 1887), pp. 284-285, (written in 833).

with zoomorphic motifs;²¹² a yellowish silk shawl or veil; a great mantle made of silk weft of a red colour on linen warp coloured yellow with long fringes, which fastened probably at the shoulder²¹³ with a small equal-armed gold brooch. There is also a very long tablet-woven strip with vestiges of stitching on one side that could adorn the dress as a border. Another rectangular linen cloth in pink with a interwoven pattern and a fringe²¹⁴ cannot be proved to belong to this burial ensemble. The hair is dyed strawberry-blonde and preserved in very long plaits, tied up in red, yellow, and green silk ribbons. From the marks on the textile, it is possible to suggest that the yellow mantle covered the head. Some remains of leather attest to the presence of shoes, and possibly of a belt. The other textiles found with the body during the later translations do not belong to this vestimentary system proposed and will be discussed separately, in Chapter 3.²¹⁵ In addition, an exceptional textile artefact, known as the Chasuble of Chelles, was put on the body. This is the front of a white linen garment, probably a vestment worn by clerics of high office, with extant silk embroidery resembling jewellery and a big embroidered cross. There were stitches at the top part and the sides, to support the selvages and probably also to facilitate lacing. Although we have not got surviving chasubles of the period, or any visual representations, it is possible this was made to resemble a liturgical vestment as we can tell by its decoration, its linen fabric and white colour. also by the possibility that it could be detachable especially if worn laced at the shoulders and the sides, although it is still quite short to have reached down a person's

²¹² The braid was too long for the standards established previously in the discussion of the length of the headband. See above note 115.

²¹³ This type of brooch is found in most burial contexts and in iconography to fasten a cloak at the shoulder as in this position it shows its best. Fastening a cloak at the middle of the chest is very usual in the iconography of the 8th and 9th century, but in all cases it is a square or a round saucer brooch that seems to have been used to fasten and keep the cloak in place.

²¹⁴ The *sudarium Balthildis* according to the *scedula*, (See Laporte, Boyer, op.cit., note 205, pp. 97-101). It was probably deposited during the translation of 833.

²¹⁵ Thus Balthild was put to rest with silk garments, a gold brooch and with an one side ecclesiastical-looking vestment on her. This last has been interpreted on the basis of the evidence in *Vita Eligii*, (*MGH*) *Scr rer Merov* 4, (see Laporte, Boyer, op.cit., note 205, p. 45) as a sign of modesty because the queen is not wearing real jewels but embroidered silk ones. It has been suggested that she expressed her status as the former queen in terms of the Byzantine fashion that was influencing the Merovingian kingdom at that time. (Vierck H.E.F., "La Chemise de Sainte Balthilde à Chelles et l' influence byzantine sur l' art de court mérovingien au VII^e siècle", in *Actes du Colloque international d' archéologie: centenaire de l' abbé Cochet*, (Rouen, 1978), pp. 52-570, esp.539 ff.) The use of the chasuble, this shirt with the sacerdotal and élite court symbolism can be explained as an effort of the Queen to underline and find justification for her very active role as a patroness of Bishops and founder of monasteries.

knees, (117 x 84cm). Nevertheless, most outer vestments are worn in this way, laced at the sides as they should be worn under and over layers of other vestments to facilitate the priest who has to change quickly and put on other items at some stages of the mass. There is also another possibility that would point out to this last feature of the half-shirt, the stitching and the probable lacing: Laporte, Boyer and Nelson mention a collective memory recorded at Chelles in the 17th century, “that Balthild had worn the chemise as an overall while waiting at the nuns at the table”.²¹⁶ It is further suggested that she might have made the garment herself and that the half-shirt, the frontal part, was only secondarily used as part of the burial costume. It is probable that the role of Balthild in Chelles, included the performance of menial tasks, considered to be acts of penance and humility, following the model of Radegund, so if this is the case, this shirt with the attributes of nobility and courtliness could have been the most tangible and ostentatious sign of her ministry to others, if it indeed functioned primarily as a kind of penance and work tabard-apron. The embroidered decoration resembles both Byzantine and Lombard ceremonial court jewellery,²¹⁷ as found and also depicted from the 6th to the 8th century.²¹⁸ It overall marks a well-staged and planned effort to allow the former Queen to be seen to be buried in both court-dress- if silk and braid borders denoted the main court dress-and sacerdotal or even episcopal splendour, also her penitence at Chelles if the recording of the collective memory of Balthild’s doings there is correct, perhaps in view of a canonization. If this half-shirt, have been made deliberately for the burial, can be characterized as burial costume. The rest of this garment system, however, comprise of

²¹⁶ Laporte, op.cit., note 205, p. 213, pp. 89-90, and Nelson J.L., “Gendering courts in the early medieval West”, in Brubaker L., Smith J.M.H.,(eds.), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 185-197, esp. p. 190 (ibidem note 22).

²¹⁷ See Vierck H.E.F., “La Chemise de Sainte Balthilde à Chelles et l’ influence byzantine sur l’ art de court mérovingien au VII siècle”, in *Actes du Colloque international d’ archéologie: centenaire de l’ abbé Cochet*, (Rouen, 1978), pp. 52-570.

²¹⁸ There is evidence for the patterned silk full-length tunic worn with fringed sashes at the waist, jewellery, coifs and *pallia*, in the dated in 546-548, Ravenna mosaic in San Vitale of Empress Theodora and the ladies of the court (see fig 3.30a). We still do not know what exactly was worn in Byzantium in the middle of the 7th century or the beginning of the 8th century, so it is difficult to compare with contemporary Frankish fashions. However, in Vierck, (see note 217), there is a great variety of forms of jewellery, secular as well as ecclesiastical ornaments covering this time span throughout the Northern, Eastern and Central Mediterranean, that can be compared see Vierck, op. cit., fig 2, p. 524, fig 3, p. 527 especially a medallion 3.1 with the personification of Constantinopolis, fig 7, p. 535, especially fig 7.7 showing the motif on the liturgical cross of Saint Gregory in Monza, fig. 11, p. 549, especially fig 11.2 showing a detail of the jewelled collar of Amalasvintha on the ivory diptych of Orestis, and fig 11.3 showing the jewelled collar of a woman on a medallion part of a *fibula* from Nocera Umbra, Tuscany.

complete items that could be worn and seen in the round, and the stitching that survives on the extant rags that remain from the dress connects the sides and parts of the cloth in contrast to the half-shirt where the stitches serve as selvages. The stitches at the top part of the shirt were in all probability not meant to attach it to a dress - this could have been a very peculiar part of a woman's garment -. This seems to have been an independent front part of a two-pieces chasuble or tabard, that could have been made primarily for living, serving and worshipping at Chelles and used secondarily as the most appropriate burial costume.²¹⁹ Its excellent state of preservation suggests that either way, it had not seen heavy use for long before the Queen's funeral. The rest of the ensemble could perhaps have been worn by any elderly woman of the high élite in real life, who cared to wear luxurious clothes in subdued colours and grow her hair long, well-groomed and dyed in the years of her confined maturity.

Abbess Bertille,²²⁰ a woman in her mid-fifties, wore a yellow and brown silk striped dress that preserves rather tight sleeves and their hems, the latter of which are decorated with coloured tablet-woven braids.²²¹ A large rectangular piece of cloth, that could have been a veil, in pale yellow silk samite,²²² was preserved with her, and also fragments of a very long tablet-woven braid of wool, possibly a girdle or a dress border. No hair or jewellery was preserved with her relics. A number of other strips, and rags of brown and blue silks, are also included with both these relics, but it is not clear if these were worn by the individuals, if they were put in the casket in the translations later, or if they were wrappings and shrouds. Bertille could have been buried in her best dress or habit and wrapped in a silk shroud.

²¹⁹ Made on order to encompass penitence, ministry, penance and courtliness solely for the burial

²²⁰ For information on the monastic career of the aristocratic abbess, *Vita Bertilae abbatissae Calensis*, (MGH), *Scriptor Merov* 6, Levison W., (ed.), (Hannover, 1913), pp. 95-109.

²²¹ She was buried in it and a part of the tunic has decomposed along with the body. The extremities of the sleeves, however, supply us with evidence on monastic garments of an aristocratic abbess whose fortunes took her from Jouarre to Chelles according to her Vita: they just reach the elbows, (a length of 30cm from the seam of the shoulder down), and could have been worn tight. Laporte, Boyer (ibidem, note 205, p. 34) suggest that this feature of a tunic that leaves the forearms uncovered resembles the monastic habit required of the monks in Egypt (see at the translation of the *Rule of St Pachomius* by Hieronymus and the *lebitonaria* tunic, in its praefatio, op. cit., note 50, pp. 66-67). Perhaps there is some truth in that assumption. The symbolism of the short-sleeved tunic or tunic without sleeves, lies either in the imitation of John the Baptist, or in the Benedictine requirement of a tunic that would allow monks to work with their hands, see note 50. The dress is luxurious but perhaps even the well-born Abbess had to or preferred to keep up with monastic traditions. See fig 2.10.

²²² See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures .

It is clear that in this case we have at our disposal archaeological textiles from two almost complete female vestimentary systems of the late 7th-early 8th century, and the evidence for headwear implies that at least one silk veil was worn on the head, covering silk ribbon-plaited hair, possibly under a large cloak. The veil is the badge of office for ecclesiastics, and it probably formed an important part of female dress in secular life as well. These women were a part of the élite and their clothes, especially in the case of the Queen who had not even been a nun -with the exception of the half shirt of the chasuble, which was a stage-managed act that marked personal choice and a *post-mortem* agenda - may not have been very far from what other élite women in Neustria wore at least as their formal costume.²²³ The ensembles are older by at least 50 or 70 years than the latest of the evidence we have for dress from the furnished burials. However, we get unique information about the tight sleeves, the colours and the use of tablet woven braids of exceptional complexity, and about colours. The hair, dyed, braided and tied in colourful ribbons, give us a unique view of the very important part of the hairdo that is otherwise lost for ever in the burials we have examined. Unfortunately, only cut parts of the braids survive, and we cannot tell about the overall appearance of the hairdo or if and when this was cut from the head- during her lifetime, upon entry at Chelles, or *post mortem/post translatio*. It is certain, however, that after the translation of the Saint, in 833, various portions of the braids were cut and distributed as relics.

Although we do not have the full length, the width and the constructional details of the dresses, we can tell that these were not very wide tunics, they were worn with long rectangular veils and that the mantle could be fringed and could cover a person from top to bottom. A very important difference between the ensemble and the evidence from the furnished burials, is that the metallic elements, brooches and buckles, have disappeared, apart from one small functional and necessary golden brooch, and that the tablet-woven braids are an organic part of dress and direct the focus to the waist, which was tied with a soft, quite long girdle and not with chatelaine hangings etc, which would have been worn at least until the middle of the 7th century. We will look at the focus on the waist here in greater detail in the next chapter.

²²³ Around the same period, Gertrude of Nivelles, another high-born lady, chose to be buried in a hairshirt. See note 67 text and Effros, *op.cit.*, note 67, pp. 1-6. Personal choice and circumstances seem to have played a decisive role in these instances.

It is evident that the archaeology of headwear brings up complex issues of social identity. Before going into the examination of how headwear is worn, by whom, and why it is introduced in a certain way and with a special signification, we need to examine more closely the textual sources, to establish all the possible varieties in the meaning of the words we have for headwear on a time-line. We need to find out more about the *vitta* and the *velum*, first on their own and then in association with one another, functioning as one system of headwear in the texts, and then, finally look out for correspondences with the material world.

2.7 The history of *vitta* and *velum* on a time-line

The words *vitta* and *velum* that we know from Roman sources supply us with what was the classical Latin signification of the objects²²⁴ and this is close enough to the lexicographical descriptions of Isidore.²²⁵ *Velum* was originally a curtain and *vitta* a headband. However, the *vittae* in other texts can have a more restricted use, as golden brocaded headbands, or else can form part of more elaborate headdresses, in both Merovingian and Carolingian times. This is evident in the texts, as we can judge from the poems of Angilbert²²⁶ and Fortunatus.²²⁷ What is important in the descriptions there is a striking correspondence between the variety of techniques concerning the uses and forms of objects, visible in the archaeology and the literary descriptions and the elaborate headwear of Merovingian and Carolingian royalty.²²⁸ Diadems not headbands, made

²²⁴ See Isid. Etym, op. cit., note 72, *velum* in classical Latin authors is charged with special symbolism, see note 73. It denotes a variety of functions such as a ship sail or any sheet of fabric stretched out to provide shelter for the sun and less often a ceremonial cover for the head for ritual purposes.

²²⁵ See notes 72, 73.

²²⁶ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, Lib.VIII, *De Virginitate*, (MGH), *Auct Antiquissimi* 4, p. 188, 265-280. See note 65.

²²⁷ Angilbertus, *Carmina* VI, *Carmen de Carolo Magno* 188, (MGH) *Poet. Lat. Med. Aevi* I, 88, pp. 371-372. See note 71.

²²⁸ There is enough archaeological material presented and analysed here to demonstrate the correspondence of a variety of forms of the artefacts of headwear to even the most imaginative descriptions inscribed within the rhetorical purposes of the writers .

with filigree decoration, like the one from Perusson dated to 580-610, are described in a poem of Fortunatus of the late 6th century, and also by Angilbert in the 9th in the same terms. In practice, however, as in the objects presented above in their context within a full vestimentary system,²²⁹ a wide variety of objects found in burials, produced in much the same way as the *vittae*, could also be used for other purposes: as borders of garments,²³⁰ decorative strips, wrist-clasped cuffs²³¹, pounces, baldrics and girdles. We do not know the words for these things, and the word *vitta* may have denoted very much the same thing as most of these different artefacts in practice, especially when it still retained the appearance of a gold foil strip braid.²³² We find the *vitta auro exornata* described by Gregory of Tours in 590 in his story of a scandal at Poitiers over a bridal present.²³³ The *vitta* is used in this context as a gold brocaded band, long enough to be a part of the ornament of the border of the altarcloth. The abbess was accused, when tried for the revolt of the nuns in Poitiers, that she took advantage of her position and used the property of the convent church, the gold braid from the altar. From the same material, the abbess was supposed to have had made both a necklace and a headband. The term used is either *foliola aurea*, which is a very descriptive term of the technique employed in the artefact- gold-foil strip, actually filigree gold foil, the type of spun gold filigree encountered in the crafts of the Merovingian royal centres discussed above - or *vitta auro*

²²⁹ See the above paradigms of the examination of the extracts of headwear within the reconstructions of the entire vestimentary systems according to the criteria used (contextuality, comparison with the average dimensions of all the known artefacts, the inherent morphological and functional properties of the artefacts) in the Kentish and Suffolk burials, see pp. 92, 95, notes 100, 101, the burial from Perusson, p. 93, note 103, the veil from the “Arnegundis” burial in Saint-Denis, pp. 94-95, note 108, the *vitta* from Cologne Cathedral, pp. 95-96, note 113 and the two vestimentary systems from Chelles reconstructed in the previous section of this chapter, pp. 116-119, note 205. Also see Appendix I, Anglo-Saxon sites, n°20, 21, Frankish sites n° 15, Alamannic sites n° 7.

²³⁰ See the Longobardic burials see Appendix I (longobardic braids) for a great variety in the use of gold foil strip bands and different techniques.

²³¹ As in the case of the appliqué decorated gold foil strip bands at the wide borders of the sleeves of the overcoat of the “Arnegundis” individual. See Appendix I, (Frankish braids) n° 15.

²³² Gregory of Tours is using the same word, *vitta* for the gold foil strip band of the altarcloth and a necklace and a headband in the story of the scandal at the convent of Poitiers, see the latin passage in note 75. The abbess was accused by Clothilde and Basina that: She played backgammon. Lay visitors ate with her. Occasionally engagement-parties were held in the nunnery. She was so lacking in reverence that she made dresses for her niece out of a silken altarcloth. Without consulting anyone, she had cut some gold leaf from the gold foil strip that bordered the altarcloth and she made a necklace and hanged it around her neck; and a headband of gold, she made for her niece although it was again something incommensurate with the occasion... Gregory of Tours, *Libri decem Historiarum*, (MGH), *Scr rer Merov* 1i, 2nd edn, Krusch B., Levison W., (eds.), (Hannover, 1951), lib.X.15, 506,10, (transl. based on Thorpe L., *Gregory of Tours the History of the Franks*, (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 571-572).

²³³ See Gregory of Tours, op.cit., note 75 for text and note 232 for translation.

exornata, the final product, a gold brocade band similar to the ones recovered in the material record. This example from Gregory can support the proposition that *vitta* may have been an inclusive term for every product of the *barbicarii* and the *plumarii*,²³⁴ the state embroiderers of the late Roman world.

In the case of *velum*, if we take citations in isolation, the sense of protection and privacy of the classical Latin word was used to denote a curtain, but also the ceremonial cover of the head of a priest or a priestess during a ritual, and sometimes also a covering of a holy place.²³⁵ This latter sense continued to be used in the saints' Lives²³⁶ such as the case of the holy cloth that covered the relics of saints hanging over the head of Eligius in his late 7th (but rewritten in the 9th) -century life.²³⁷ This is developed further by the increasing use of *velum* to mean an altarcloth, as in Bede in *De Tabernaculo*. This theological treatise, written in 729,²³⁸ mentions both a veil and an altarcloth and uses the same word for each, *velum*. A veil as an altarcloth is mentioned in the 9th century Polyptych of St-Remi of Reims, as *velamina altaris*.²³⁹ The word *velum* can still bear the meaning of a ship sail, as in classical authors, and in a letter of Cassiodorus Senator²⁴⁰ in the early 6th century, but this use is not very far from the literal sense of the word as a wide piece of cloth, probably of a single length.²⁴¹ However, *velum* in isolation is found most of the time in saints' lives,²⁴² and in ecclesiastical and secular legislation as we shall see shortly, as the most popular designation of the veil covering of the women devoted to

²³⁴ Mentioned as such in the Edict of Diocletian, (*Diokletians Preisedict, Edict on prices*, (301), XIX, Lauffer S.,(ed.), (Berlin, 1971), texts n° 56, 265, 266, 267, 268). For the terms *fabricarius* and *plumarius* see in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v.

²³⁵ See note 69.

²³⁶ “*Dagoberti Regis velum tenentis...*”, *Passio Sancti Sigismundi regis*, (*MGH) Scr rer Merov* 2, Krusch, B. (ed.), (Hannover, 1888), p. 86, 1.

²³⁷ Here as elsewhere as we will shall see shortly, the term *sacrum velamen* is the synonym for *velum*. *Vita Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis*, (*MGH) Scr rer Merov* 4, Krusch, B.(ed.), (Hannover, 1902), pp. 663-742, esp. 675, 8: “...*sub quorum sacro velamine reclinato in cilicio.*”...and beneath that sacred covering he rested his head on a haircloth .. (trans. Mc Namara J.A., (trans.), “Dado of Rouen, Life of St Eligius of Noyon” in *Medieval Hagiography: an Anthology*, Head T., (ed.), (London, 2001), p. 143.

²³⁸ Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, *CCSL* (1999), col. 479-1969, 1194, pp. 5-139.

²³⁹ *Polyptych S. Remigii Remensis* c. 17, 123, Guérard B., (ed.), (Paris, 1853), p. 56, col. 2.

²⁴⁰ See note 69: used to denote a sail in Cicero. *De Orator*. 2. 44. 187, 2. 23. 75; in Livy. *Hist*. 31. 45. 11; Vergil. *Aeneid*. 5. 281 and in Cassiodorus. *Var. Lib* 7, *Epist*. 9, (*MGH) Auct Antiquiss* 12, p. 208.

²⁴¹ For Late Roman, Merovingian and Carolingian lengths and widths of cloth see Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures.

²⁴² See note 67, *Vita S. Geretrudis*, (*MGH) Scr rer Merov* 2, pp. 461-462) who included in her last wishes for a simple burial: “*nec lineum vestimentum super se misissent praeter unum velum vile multum, quo quaedam peregrina sanctimonialis ante dies plures illi pro benedictione direxerat...*”.

God, as an extension of the ceremonial covering of a pagan priestess, which was also called *velum*. So, in the case of *velum* there are not really two different meanings for the same word; rather there is a further development and inclusion within the same semantic field of the curtain and the headveil for ritual purposes, now extended to the cover of a holy place, and of a holy persons' head, and the altarcloth. These semantic changes in the words take us past the usage of the veils from the archaeological materials we have, since we do not have Roman priestess' veils at our disposal or Merovingian altarcloths, but still they match up with them, since metonymically the headcoverings of saints like Balthild or abbesses like Bertille are the coverings of holy persons and of their relics, and they lend as much of their *virtus* to the place they were venerated as does a holy altar.²⁴³

The classification of the written evidence for *vittae* must also start from both when the word appears in isolation and when it is part of a wider system. Let us take citations in isolation first. The earliest isolated use in classical Latin sources is found in the context of rituals: these citations denote headbands made of white wool for priests, as well as bridal strips of cloth under the late Roman bridal veil worn for a period after the wedding.²⁴⁴ Vergil used it in all these contexts, and the terms he used were disseminated well as his works continued to be read as a latin textbook throughout the period of our concern. In this latter sense of the bridal wreath we find intertextual evidence for the *vitta auro exornata* of Gregory of Tours, already mentioned.²⁴⁵ Gregory mentions Virgil and quotes him several times in his Histories.²⁴⁶ The *vitta* is in this context a gold brocaded band, similar to the ones recovered in the material record, as we saw previously in the royal burial in Cologne, and the corpus of around 69 cases from most of early medieval Europe.²⁴⁷ Gregory used a rather intellectual but still very common textbook term to describe this artefact.

²⁴³ So, *velum* can still be the special veil having a certain ritual purpose of the nun, the vowess, the widow, or an altarcloth, covering a holy place. In the case of the veil the word has a restricted and specific use; for altarcloth, other terms are used as well, such as *palla*, *lintheamen*, etc.

²⁴⁴ See note 69, esp. Vergilius (*Aeneid* 5.134).

²⁴⁵ See notes 75, 232, Gregory's text and translation.

²⁴⁶ Gregory of Tours, mentions Vergil and quotes from the Aeneid in *Libri decem Historiarum*, (MGH), *Scr rer Merov* Ii, 2nd edn, Krusch B., Levison W, (eds.), (Hannover, 1951), *Aeneid* I. 46-7, (Gregory, *HF*. II. 29); *Aeneid* I. 100-101; 118, (Gregory *HF*.IV.30); *Aeneid* III. 56-57, (Gregory, *HF*. IV. 46); *Aeneid* III. 56-57, (Gregory, *HF*. VIII.21); *Aeneid* VIII. 148-149, (Gregory, *HF*. IX. 6).

²⁴⁷ See Appendix I (braids).

In this comparison of words there are examples that can be found in isolation, claiming a space on their own in a text,²⁴⁸ but can also be examined as part of a garment system. In fact, where *vitta* and *velum* can be examined in combination in the same garment system, they always mean headgear. This can be illustrated in Aldhelm of Malmesbury's prose version of *De Virginitate*, written in 709.²⁴⁹ Aldhelm, a contemporary of Bede, became one of the most popular Anglo-Saxon writers of the 8th century.²⁵⁰ In *De Virginitate*, he condemns the luxurious and wordly costume affected by men and women in religious orders of his times, in a style that is employing unusual vocabulary and highly complex syntax. More specifically he addresses the abbess Hildelith and a number of the nuns of Barking Abbey. He makes specific mention of garments with silken borders, linen undergarments, red and blue tunics, sleeves with silk borders, red leather shoes and complex head coverings. An alternative translation of this passage could read like this:

...bright and coloured veils (headdresses) which hang down, held in place by fillets (or ribbons) sewn to them.

The word that is used here for the headcovering is not *velum*, the badge of ecclesiastical vocation of these women, the *velatae*, but *mafortis*, a more rarely found word; it is only found to describe secular and specifically bridal veils of women who are not of the Church - first of all a Queen, Radegund, probably a very long piece of cloth, as

²⁴⁸ Separately these terms can mean any kind of fabric used as cover or protection, especially of something holy in the case of the term *velum*, and in the case of a *vitta*, all the products made of gold foil strip, filigree, gold brocade, but this depends on the context.

²⁴⁹ Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* 58, (MGH) *Auct. Antiquissimi* 15, pp. 317-318, "*Nam cultus gemini sexus huiusmodi constat subucula bissina, tunica coccinea sive iacintina, capitium et manicae sericis clavatae; galliculae rubricatis pellibus ambiuntur; antiae frontis et temporum cincinni calamistro crispantur; pulla capitis velamina candidis et coloratis mafortibus cedunt, quae vittarum nexibus assuttae talotenus prolixius dependunt*"... This sort of glamorization for either sex consists in fine linen shirts, in scarlet or blue tunics, in necklines and sleeves embroidered with silk; their shoes are trimmed with red-dyed leather; the hair of their forlocks and the curls at their temples are crimped with a curlin-iron; dark-grey veils for the head give way to bright and coloured headdresses, which are sewn with interlacings of ribbons and hang down as long as the ankles... (trans. Lapidge M., Herren M., *Aldhelm. The prose works*, (Ipswich and Cambridge, 1979), pp. 127-128. The shorter poem version of *De Virginitate* adheres closely to the earlier prose version. Hence some points of obscurity in the poetic version may be clarified by reference to the prose work. (Lapidge, Herren, op.cit., p 197). Unfortunately the above syntactically complex passage has no equivalent in the verse version.

²⁵⁰ Aldhelm was read on the Continent in the 8th and 9th centuries: Alcuin's own Latin verse betrays familiarity with Aldhelm. (Lapidge, Herren, op.cit., note 249, p. 2).

it is equated to a *savanum*, also meaning a shawl,²⁵¹ and a *lindeolum*, which could be both translated as a sheet and a shroud, in the passage from her life we saw earlier.²⁵² Gregory of Tours used the term *mafortem olosyricum* for the bridal veil the niece of the abbess of Poitiers was supposed to have adorned with the *vitta*. The secularity of the item is doubly underlined here. It is of note that these other words, used to describe the secular world and women in their other functions, are extremely rare. The veil of a woman pilgrim described in the *Life of Gertrude*, the saint of Nivelles, written a little after her death after the middle of the 7th century, given as a present to Gertrude, along with her *cilicium*, a hairshirt, the first to appear in the Saint's Lives used in penitence and in Gertrude's funeral, is described as *velum*, not *mafortis*, or *savanum*, or *lindeolum*.²⁵³ The *lindeolum* features very often in Saint's Lives, but as a shroud, and almost never as a head-veil for women. Therefore, this other term, *mafortis*, is rare but has very strong secular connotations which link it to secular dress, probably of a luxurious material, given that in one instance it is worn by a young Queen, and in the other it is the festive bridal veil of the niece of the abbess of Poitiers. It thus seems that the nuns of Barking, condemned by Aldhelm, were dressing up as secular brides. This can be seconded by the archaeological evidence of the Barking Abbey that is available from the Middle Saxon period: toilet sets, silver gilt pins with partial gilding that just meant to be seen outside the veil they probably secured.²⁵⁴

Here we have, in the wider semantic fields of the veil, the headband intercutting in the way veils are held in place, as they are both combined in one clothing system. Even if we take into account Aldhelm's exaggeration, in his stress on the extravagance of the nuns' unseemly luxury, the words used there to denote veil are not *velum*; the main word found here, *mafortis*, means the secular veil, or a shawl, a covering of the head and the

²⁵¹ A cloth, or a shawl in Niermeyer-Kleft-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v.

²⁵² See note 59, latin text and translation, analysis, p. 80.

²⁵³ See note 67.

²⁵⁴ For Barking Abbey, Greater London, see Ross S., *Dress pins from Anglo-Saxon England: their production and typo-chronological development*, unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, (Oxford, 1991), p.124; Webster L., Backhouse J., (eds.), *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900*, British Museum Exhibition Catalogue, (London, 1991), pp. 53, 88-94; cf ibidem, p. 90 on Whitby finds; see Peers C.R., Radford C.A.R., "The Saxon monastery at Whitby," *Archaeologia* 89 (1943), pp. 22-59, also Owen-Crocker G.R., *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 143.

shoulders.²⁵⁵ The headband and/or the ribbons serve, in this combination of the elements of the headwear system, to picture the superfluous and absolutely secular appearance of these privileged women of the 8th century in holy orders; and this seems to continue the fashions of the earlier centuries, attested in the mortuary record for the 6th and the 7th century, wearing long veils, probably pleated, as in northern Francia, or long and ornate with metallic details such as the one worn by the woman at Mill Hill, or the Kentish brocaded headbands or even the long veil with the gold foil edges, under the golden headband of the lady under the choir in Cologne Cathedral. It is interesting that the hair of these nuns is bound with a headband and probably with ribbons, which reminds one of the hairdo of the near-contemporary to these women, the royal recluse Balthild. So the ways of adornment of the head which we have seen evidenced across a wide time span in the archaeology were used by Aldhelm to castigate the vanity and coquetry of these probably high-born and probably lively nuns.

Other terms which function within a system, in order to signify a secular veil, are the words *linteolum* and *cofia*²⁵⁶ ascribed to Radegundis, which each have aesthetic and functional links to the specific form, dimensions and perhaps material of the headveil. *Linteolum* as we saw earlier, is found mostly in Saint's Lives to denote the shroud of a saint.²⁵⁷ The second term operates in a concise manner at the end of the word cluster of the long list of objects and clothes that are deposited on the altar by Radegundis.²⁵⁸ It is in the plural, suggesting more than one item, as are the rest of the other nouns, apparently each designating a different part of the vestimentary system of the Queen: all the rest refer to her chemises, her sleeves or gauntlets, then the headwear, *cofias*, then her

²⁵⁵ Compare the veil, *mafortis*, of Saint Radegundis, when she was a queen in note 59 and the veil of the woman pilgrim of Gertrude, *velum*, note 67 and also the *velamen* in classical authors, note 69 and Isid. Etym., note 72 the *mafortem olosyricum* in Gregory of Tours *Libri decem Historiarum*, lib.X.15, for the bridal veil of the niece of the abbess (*Iudicium Pictaviensis*, 506,15). In most of these cases, the headveil and the band go hand in hand.

²⁵⁶ See notes 79, 154, Niermeyer, s.v.

²⁵⁷ See note 79 and a number of examples including the burial usage of *lentieolum*, *lentium*, *linteum* from Saints lives: *Vita Lonoghylly abbatis Buxiacensis*, Levison W., (ed.), (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 7, (Hannover, 1920), p. 436; *Vita Corbiniani, Arbei Frisigensis*, Krusch B., Levison W., (eds.), (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 6, (Hannover, 1913), pp. 508-509; *Vita Eucherii episcopi Aurelianensis*, Levison W., (ed.), (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 6, (Hannover, 1913), p.469; *Vita Caesarii archiepiscopi Arelatensis*, Krusch B., (ed.), (*MGH*) *Scr rer Merov* 3, (Hannover, 1896), pp. 477, 498; Hincmar of Rheims, *Vita Remigii*, Krusch B., (ed.), (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 3, (Hannover, 1896), c. 25, p. 321.

²⁵⁸ Fortunatus Venantius, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 2,1, 13, 26 5f, p. 369. For the translation see in Chapter 2, included in the main text, p. 75, note 43.

brooches and gold jewellery. In all probability the term *cofias* is an inclusive one denoting headgear, veils, jewellery, pins etc., worn at a given time, especially on a day when she had to be adorned with particular worldly distinction, with whatever a wealthy woman should wear.²⁵⁹

Although Gregory uses the term *vitta auro exornata* to describe an ornamental gold foil strip border, a headband or a necklace,²⁶⁰ when he describes a girdle, even though it may have been made of gold foil strip or gold brocade, the term is different: *fila aurea*. This suggests a girdle, following a terminology distinct from that of a belt (*cingulum*: see Chapter 3) because of the way it was made; it was reminiscent of a headband, but was not called *vitta*, since it was not used on the head. Confusion between two different syntagms of accessories with a different function and a different place in the system could thus be avoided, because Gregory used a descriptive term, not *cingulum*. This separation appears also, as we have seen, in Angilbert's *Carmen de Carolo Magno*:²⁶¹

“...(for Rotrude): *Immixta est niveis ametistina vitta capilis, / Ordinibus variis gemmarum luce coruscans: Namque corona caput pretiosis aurea gemmis/ implicat et pulchrum subnectiit fibula amictum....*(for Bertha): *Caput aurato diademate cingitur alium diadem...*”

The *vittae* here are described in association with the diadems of Rotrude, Bertha and Queen Liutgard. This suggests that these bands are something different from a diadem, but sometimes worn in combination with it. In contrast, in Venantius Fortunatus' *Carmina* the term *brattea gemmata* and *aurea filea*²⁶² are used to describe what seems to be the same thing, focusing on the constructional details of the gold foil strip, the spun gold, and the bejewelled studs, another descriptive term. In Angilbert's poem²⁶³ the Queen appears in a purple *vitta*, a word carrying royal, sacerdotal, bridal significations:

²⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 75, note 43.

²⁶⁰ Compare the case of the Poitiers scandal, notes 75, 232. See the reference to a decorative border, a girdle, a headband in Angilbert, *Carmen di Carolo Magno*, 188,15 (*MGH Poet Lat Aevi Karol I*, Dümmler E., (ed.), (Berlin, 1880): “...*aurea fila ligant clamidem...*” which can refer to a border or a girdle.

²⁶¹ See note 106, for a translation of this part.

²⁶² See note 65.

²⁶³ See note 65.

presumably a silk tablet-woven braid representing her betrothal to the king. In all these instances, but perhaps not so in the case of Aldhelm,²⁶⁴ the underlying meaning of the Roman bridal *vitta* in conjunction to the wider semantic field of headcovering²⁶⁵ still persists. When *vittae* are described as parts of a wider garment system, the focus is not on them, however, and there is no direct reference to marriage. This lack of a direct link to marriage (unless an ironic underpinning exists) is further shown in the example from Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* mentioned above,²⁶⁶ as also in the reference to this word in Hartmann of St Gall's *Vita S. Wiboradae* in 973, the last example I know, where it is associated with a *theristrum* - a light summer tunic - and it is used as a girdle.²⁶⁷

As far as the word *vitta* is concerned, it seems that after the 10th century the term almost disappears from the sources. We will also probably never know the words signifying these objects in most of the vernaculars of the writers of the early medieval period; the exception is the Anglo-Saxon written record, for the word *binde*, *bindan*, *bend*, or *bænd* appears in three late Anglo-Saxon wills,²⁶⁸ out of a corpus of 40 wills of the 10th and the early 11th century: these are apparently gold bands, probably worn on the head²⁶⁹ of the high status women who are the testators, Ælfswith, Wulfwaru, Æthelgifu; these women bequeathed them to their close female relatives, secular or attached to a convent. In the *Indicia Monasterialia*, an 11th century sign-language guide

²⁶⁴ Unless by this further signification Aldhelm is underpinning the low morals of the nuns.

²⁶⁵ The semantics of gestures in the art of Classical Antiquity suggest that the woman that uncovers or is about to reveal herself - her head - in front of somebody else, or an audience, takes on the gesture of Juno, the bride, in front of Jupiter, see *Oxford Dictionary of Classical Art* s.v.

²⁶⁶ See note 249.

²⁶⁷ Hartmannus Sangallensis, *Vita Wiboradae*, AASS, *Maji I*, pp. 284-293. A *theristrum* is also found in Aldhelm, *De Virginitate*, LV II, 316, 20, see note 249 in the context of the dress of the widow Judith following the Vulgate Judith: 8.1: "*Judith, ... post obitum Manasse sumpto viduitatis theristro et spreto sponsali peplo blanda procorum lenocinia contemptens, ...*" Judith, the daughter of Merari, scorned the flattering allurements of suitors after the death of Manasses, taking up the weeds of widowhood and rejecting a wedding dress... (trans. Lapidge M., Herren M., *Aldhelm. The prose works*, (Ipswich and Cambridge, 1979). This word is first found in the Vulgate *Gen*: 38.10 and then in Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Isaia*, 2, 3, 23, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 24, 3, 23, and idem, *Epistola* 107, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 30, 7.

²⁶⁸ Whitelock D., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, (Cambridge, 1930), Owen-Crocker G., *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 96-101, and 225. These are the wills of Byrhtic and Ælfswith (Whitelock, op. cit., p. 28, 4-5), bequeathing half a golden band, probably a heirloom, the will of Wulfwaru who passed down a band worth of twenty mancuses (ibidem, p. 64, 20-21), and the will of Æthelgifu, who left to a close relative five gold mancuses which were to be cut from her band (ibidem, p. 13).

²⁶⁹ According to Owen-Crocker: "...although the contexts do not make it certain that these bands are for the head, it seems probable, since the Old English word *bend* is found elsewhere (in the Anglo-Saxon glossaries) glossing Latin *diadema* and *nimbus*", op. cit., note 268, p. 225.

for monks who followed the rule of silence,²⁷⁰ the sign to indicate a woman is “to trace on one’s forehead from one ear to the other in the sign of a *binde*”. It is of some significance that in the 11th century this evidence points to the conclusion that headbands are worn by most social strata in England, and these could be made of perishable materials, silk or wool brocade or leather. As implied earlier, we can only wonder if this was always true, or if earlier bands denoted only high status.

Conversely, we have seen in the references to the veil in the saints’ lives of the 7th and the 8th century that this is always termed a *velum* or else there must be a qualifier: the term is *sanctum* or *sacrum velamen*²⁷¹ or *velamen sanctimonialium* as with the veil belonging to Radegundis, or in the *Vita S. Balthildis* composed at Chelles in 673-8,²⁷² or in Paul the Deacon.²⁷³ So, it is the holy veil, called *velum*, that is most prominent in this type of source material.

Du Cange has offered a distinction between the different functions of the veil, calling them *velum consecrationis, ordinationis, professionis*. *Velum* appears in papal letters, as of Gelasius I as early as 494²⁷⁴ and decrees as in Eugenius II in 829;²⁷⁵ and also in a great number of regulative texts, as in Caesarius of Arles’ 6th-century *Rule* for the nuns of the monastery of his sister Hilaria.²⁷⁶ The word that is used as a widows’ and a brides’ secular veil in Gregory of Tours is mostly, however, *mafortis*.²⁷⁷ The same

²⁷⁰ Kluge F., “Zur Geschichte der Zeichensprache angelsächsische Indicia Monasterialia,” *Internationale Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft* 2 (1885), pp. 116-137, esp. p. 129 § 127.

²⁷¹ See “..velamine sancto tegere sanctimonialia..”, “..consulatus sanctam virginem sanctoque tectam velamine osculatus est..”, “... Heylica velate mater castissima turbe...”: *Vita Erhardi episcopi Bavarici*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 6, Krusch B.(ed.), (Hannover, 1913), c.14, c. 25, and c.5,1; “...velare sanctimonialia...”: *Vita Aldegundis abbatissae Malbodiensis*, ibid, 89, 5. The action of the consecration is significantly enoted by the verb *velare*: “...At ubi, illa accepit, protinus a vociferatione conticuit. Benedixit vestimenta eius et velari eam parentibus religiosa veste precoepit et a carnibus et vino abstinere debere dixit...”: *Vita Austrigisili episcopi Viturigi*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 4, Krusch B.(ed.), (Hannover, 1902), p. 199,15.

²⁷² *Vita Balthildis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, Krusch B. (ed.), (Hannover, 1888) pp. 482-508, esp. 506: “...Spiritus succenderat gratia, ita ut vivum relinqueret coniugem et se Christo domino sub sacro velamine consecraret et multa bona ut Christo sponso perageret...”.

²⁷³ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, (MGH) *Scr rer Lang. et Ital. Saec. VI-IX*, p. 356.

²⁷⁴ See note 68.

²⁷⁵ Eugenii II, *Concilium Romanum* (826), in *Additamenta ad Hludowici Pii et Hlotharii capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 28-29, p. 375.

²⁷⁶ Caesarius of Arles, *Regula Sanctarum virginum*, (a.522-534), Morin G., (ed.), (Bonn, 1933). This Rule was in use in 567 in Radegundis’ convent of Sainte Croix at Poitiers and it remained a point of reference for most of the other convents in the Early Middle Ages.

²⁷⁷ See *mafortem olosyricum*, in Gregory of Tours lib. X 15, ibidem, *Iudicium Pictaviensis*, 506, 15.

author describes the consecrated woman, who bursts into the conclave of Saint Venerandus in Clermont to declare boldly a vision she had about the man who should be appointed as the new bishop, as a *velata mulier*.²⁷⁸ The word *velum* appears in secular and ecclesiastical legislation until the later middle ages, concerning the modesty and propriety of women who profess to be religious, and it is the sign of consecration for them, no matter what their status is, whether they are servants or nobles, widows, recluses, confined in their premises, as we see in the various capitularies, Synods and Church Councils of the Frankish kingdom in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries,²⁷⁹ and also in the case of the royal divorce of the Queen Theudberga.²⁸⁰ In most of these, there are

²⁷⁸ Contrast the above to the veil worn by the prophetess, who is a woman devoted to the church, but not a consecrated nun and although popular at times, the bishops treat her like a heretic and a nuisance : “*mulier velata atque devota deo*”, *ibidem*, Lib.II, 12, p. 573, 14 in the episode of the election of the new bishop of Clermont-Ferrand.

²⁷⁹ Only to quote some of the great number of capitularies concerning the consecration of women: *Capitulare missorum in Theodonis villa datum prime mere ecclesiasticum* (803-804), in *Karoli Magni Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 14, p. 122; *Concilium Vernense* (755), in *Pippini Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 6, 11, 12, pp. 34-35; *Capitulare Papiense pro lege tenendum* (835), in *Capitularia Hludowici II*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 2, p. 90; *Decretum Vermeriense* (758-768), in *Pippini Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A. (eds.) (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 16, 21, p.41 *Ansegisi Abbatís Capitularium collectio Libri IV*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.) (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), Lib. I, clauses 45, 57, 71,72, Lib. II, clause 40, pp. 401-404, 423; *Concilium Meldense-Parisiense* (845-846), in *Additamenta ad Capitularia Regum Franciae Occidentis (Karoli II)*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 66, 67, 70, pp. 414-415; *Concilium Neuchingense* (772), Werminghoff A., (ed.), (MGH) *Conc Aevi Merovingici et Aevi Carolini* I, (Hannover, 1906), clause 18, p. 103; *Concilium Romanum* (743), Werminghoff A., (ed.), (MGH) *Concilia Aevi Merovingici et Aevi Carolini* I, (Hannover, 1906), clauses 12, 8, 3, pp. 10, 15, 31; *Concilium Triburiense* (895), in *Additamenta ad Capitularia Regum Franciae Orientalis*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 23, 24, 25, pp. 226-228; *Episcoporum ad Hlud imperatore ad relatio* (a. 829), in *Additamenta ad Hludovici Pii Capitularia*, A. Boretius and V. Krause, (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clauses 47, 48, 50, 51, p. 42. “*Velamen religionis*” is a recurrent theme e.g. *Quierzy concilium* (858), Hartmann W., (ed.). (MGH), *Conc Aevi Carolini* III, (Hannover, 1984), clause 6, p. 412.

The expression for the consecration is the same, “*velatio virginum*” or “*velamen sacrum*”: *Soissons concilium* (866), *expositio*, Hartmann W., (ed.), (MGH) *Conc Aevi Karol IV*, (Hannover, 1998), pp. 213-215; *Aachen concilium* (860), Hartmann W., (ed.), (MGH) *Conc Aevi Carolini IV*, (Hannover, 1998), clauses 3, 6,15, p. 3; *Douzy concilium*, H. (874), Hartmann W., (ed.), (MGH) *Concilia Aevi Merovingici et Aevi Carolini IV*, (Hannover, 1998), clauses 10, 21, pp. 585, 591.

The terms *velamen sacrum*, *velamen virginum* etc. and *velum* are interchangeable. There is great concern that the consecration is under the control of the proper authorities, in the region and the diocese of the region of the woman, according to her relations, her position in life, her marital status and age.

²⁸⁰ *Synodus Aquensis I, Acta de Theudberga regina emissa* (860), Krause V., Boretius A. (eds.) (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 3, p. 464: “*Tunc isdem rex lugubri voce,... coepit nobis dicere de sua uxore , quam desideravit habere, quod ipsa obnixis et continuis precibus postularet, ut*

restrictions in the ways a woman should be allowed to take the veil; it is the male relatives who decide on a woman's monastic profession, or the king, or sometimes a bishop. A recurrent motif in saints' lives is how the decision of the woman nevertheless prevailed miraculously. All these references show that the veil generates the way in which female existence and life was organised, protected and also restricted, inside the confines of privacy and male control. In Isidore we also find another type of veil that is also used as *velum professionis*, associated with prostitutes, *meretrices*: the *amiculum*.²⁸¹ Unfortunately, there is no evidence, textual or material, apart from the late Roman authors or the fathers of the Church²⁸² or Isidore who refers to the words used in the classical world and his times, as to the ways early medieval prostitutes were marked off or the adulterous wives. This could have been the other side of the restriction and the marking out of the wearer: this is one of the qualities of the veil, and suggests its role and usage in the vestimentary systems of the early middle ages to demarcate the woman and communicate this message as quickly as possible to her environment. The veil is always protecting something, and at the same time represents a certain social function.

From the above, it seems different types of veils were used to mark out different types of cultural and personal identities of a woman. These were probably signs that we will never fully understand, and they are only hinted at by the authors examined here. However, it seems that longer and ornate, probably coloured veils worn with a headband, probably coloured or even of precious materials, denoted marital status, and this fits with the description of the young Queen Radegund. Perhaps this is the reason why the nuns at Barking are described in these ways. Their veil is totally inappropriate, and they sin when they wear it in this mode. The other *velamina*, as worn by the pilgrim with the hairshirt in the *Life of Gertrude*, or the veil of the older Radegund, the recluse, or in the *Life of*

vinculis coniugalibus absoluta, maritali videlicet thoro, ut ipsa testabatur, indigna, sacrum velamen suscipere et Christo domino servire mereretur". The veil in this case serves as a synonym for consecration, that would be seen as an act of expiation for the fabricated grave sins of the Queen. See Airlie S., "Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II," *Past and Present* 161 (1998), pp. 3-38, for more on this infamous divorce case.

²⁸¹ Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive originum Libri XX*, (annotated edition Lindsay W.M.), t.II, Oxford Classical Texts, Liber XIX, Cap. xxxii, 19, *De palliis feminarum*, xxv, 15 : "*Amiculum est meretricum pallium lineum. Hunc apud veteres matronae in adulterio deprehensae induebantur, ut in tali amiculo potius quam in stola polluerent pudicitiam.*" :...The *amiculum* is the linen headveil of prostitutes. It is worn since the times of our ancestors by married ladies when they are proved to be adulterers, so that in such a headveil can far better pollute their virtue than in the headveil of the married woman...

²⁸² See Chapter 1, section 1.2 A vestimentary system etc. pp. 21-22, notes 13,14.

Balthild could be a more practical and cheap version, probably shorter, in sombre colours or in the natural fleece colours advised by St Caesarius. It is also probable that a veil like this could be the headcovering of the *ancillae*, the unfree workers who wove in royal and ecclesiastical estates and *gynaecea*.²⁸³ A headband on this probably denoted a wife, whether it was tablet-woven or just a cord, or even made of purple cloth as when worn by royalty. There might have been other local varieties. We will never know what the red and blue-black veils, worn with a tablet-woven band, meant to their contemporaries. The qualifier of “*pulla*” found in Aldhelm, is also found in late Roman contexts to denote mourning, as in the case of the sombre coloured *toga pulla*²⁸⁴ and is used to create a sharp contrast with the veil’s colour and artistry in texture, achieved by weave patterns and embroidery. This cannot exclude the possibility that the spiritual calling of the fully-fledged or not, consecrated women was perceived as and expressed through overtones of the social alienation signified by *toga pulla*; and this could encompass both the mourning for the human condition in the secular world and the loss of the heavenly hereafter and a meaning as a barrier for all things of this world, a total loss of gender identity.

It is however probable, from what we have seen thus far, that fashion played an important role in these significations: there is a lot of the evidence from the 7th century on both sides of the Channel attesting to longer, pleated veils, for example. All in all, however, the most crucial factor in the characterisation of a distinct veil, more than fashion and regionality, was probably the marital status of the woman in Merovingian

²⁸³ See for these establishments, the way these functioned and more information in reference to the low status of the female weavers in these, in Herlihy D., *Opera Muliebria. Women and Work in Medieval Europe*, (New York, 1990), pp. 90-91; also about the Carolingian legislation in reference to maintainance and control of these cf Kuchenbuch L., “*Opus feminine*”, in Goetz H.W. (ed.), *Weibliche Lebensgestaltung im frühen Mittelalter*, (Cologne-Weimar-Wien, 1991), pp.139-175; about the *Gynaecea* in the late Roman State, see Wild J.P., “The Gynaecea”, in Goodburn R., Bartholomew P., *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*, *British Archaeological Reports Supplementary Series 15*, (Oxford, 1976), pp. 51-59.

²⁸⁴ “*Pulla capitis velamina candidis et coloratis mafortibus*”, Aldhelmus, *De Virginitate* 58, (*MGH Auct. Antiquissimi* 15, p. 318. For its use in Late Roman cultural contexts as a signifier of mourning and its use as a form of social protest by men in the Senate encompasses all types of visual messaging of social alienation see Harlow M., “Clothes maketh the man: power dressing and elite masculinity in the later Roman world”, in Brubaker L., Smith J.M.H., (eds.), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 63 and also in Hieronymus Histriensis, *Epistula* 66, 6, Migne P. (ed.), *PL* 22, col. 642A.

and Carolingian society, as bride, wife, nun of various registers, or prostitute; this was the most important element among her identities and demographics, and it was probably encoded in the type of the veil she was wearing.

Velum and *vitta* have been put here in a historical perspective organised into a structural study of the words, which were first examined in isolation in the examples of authors of different genres: Angilbert, Fortunatus, Bede, Cassiodorus, Gregory of Tours. Then they were contextualized within vestimentary systems and their role was explored in association with one another, as in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* and then in the example of the dress system of Queen Radegund, to see how they functioned within clusters of words pertaining to clothing. The semantic relationship between these terms and other alternative terms like *linteolum*, *velamen*, *mafortis*, syntagms of near synonyms, were examined and also the terms that presented an affinity as to the material and the techniques like *brattea gemmata* and *aurea filea*, were put under consideration. We moved in this analysis from the form of the headbands and veils and tried to find links with the terms used in texts, and then went on to the content of these extracts of a clothing system in all its possible associative relationships in the texts, with the aim of finding out how these systems worked and of learning more about the living experience and the identities of the people who wore them. The information on how these systems operated, and the main factors of signification, can be shown as follows.

The verbal and cognitive equivalents of *vitta* and *velum*, or these words themselves, are present in every cluster of words describing vestimentary systems of early medieval women. The variety of the terms and the complexity of their associations reveals that headgear functions as a system within a wider system having, at its most elaborate,²⁸⁵ textile parts and metalwork accessories,²⁸⁶ but also at its simplest, as in the case of a nun's veil, just a veil and one or two pins. We have little evidence in the sources about the headwear of non-élite social strata, or of the roles that existed outside of the places these veils were worn, the palace, the villa, sometimes the town or the cloister. *Vitta* could be the specific linguistic equivalent of a headband - although it is also an

²⁸⁵ Like the élite and royal headwear we examined in the cases of Radegundis, the women at the court of Charlemagne, the women of Ravenna.

²⁸⁶ Headbands, jewelled or plain, diadems, brooches, large hairpins, pins.

inclusive artefact, a braid which is multifunctional within a clothing system.²⁸⁷ It can accentuate different visual axes of the system according to the significance the social context places on them.

We will never know what the people with limited levels of or no literacy would call these bands, especially in their native tongue, but we have to make allowances for the choices of the terms employed by the authors; their environment, cultural circumstances and education and of course personal taste surely were some restrictive factors to the means of their linguistic expression. Writing amidst the non static cultural mosaic of their times, would mean that authors faced at times communicative problems, lack of sufficient means of expression to describe something new or foreign and verbal confusions at least as much as we do today.

The way a writer sets about this problem of the varieties in the meaning of a word tells us some things about how the system works and also how something is worn according to the writer of course.²⁸⁸ So, for example, in order to avoid confusion between two different syntagms of accessories with the same form and material - braids - but a different function – a headband and a kind of belt - Gregory of Tours uses a descriptive, general term, *foliola*, Fortunatus uses *fila*, with neutral connotations in the sense that it is not inscribed in any particular syntagm of accessories, but rather convey information on its form and technique, that is, something like a soft woven girdle. Gregory and others also use separate terms for a diadem,²⁸⁹ because it is probably made and also worn in different way. *Velum* is a more exclusive term: we examined how it came to mean the veil of the woman who is devoted to God, suggesting the maximum cover of a holy person's head and shoulders, and it is used more widely to mean her habit, covering her from head to foot and her consecration.²⁹⁰ Secular textile headwear,²⁹¹ according to our source material, usually includes metalwork accessories, but we cannot tell much about the length and the material, apart from the cases of fashion presented above, the colour of

²⁸⁷ A decorative border, at the hem, the neck, the cuffs of a tunic or a cloak, a soft woven girdle, perhaps a soft baldric, the hem of a veil etc.

²⁸⁸ If the function of this gold foil strip braid within this system is very different from a headband because it has nothing to do with headwear, a different term is used.

²⁸⁹ *Diadema*, *corona*, for male royalty usually.

²⁹⁰ Although it belongs to the textile part of headgear not once in our sources is it found in conjunction with headwear metalwork accessories.

²⁹¹ *Maforte*, *Linteamen*, *Savanum*.

the fabric (the samples can reflect only personal choice) or its decoration, embroidery or other elements, which are hardly stated. The system functions on the basis of the pictogram of female identity,²⁹² and its content is revealed in the way the semantic fields relate and lend themselves to metaphorical uses. The priority is given to technique, something that is pronounced in the sources, which resulted in high visibility; this, even if we cannot tell much from the scanty vestiges of the material record, remains a prominent factor in most literary descriptions, and this in a social messaging system with aesthetic leanings towards seriously ostentatious display shown in everyday dress as well as in burial costume .

C. Conclusion

As we have seen, in the ways the system functions and with the help of the criteria of contextual reconstruction of the material remains, a wide variety of practices in the uses of the same things and the signification for a number of these can be brought to light. For the women of some of the social levels examined in this study, we have a picture of the multiplicity of factors that form the choices of headwear. These form links between our different types of source material. Let us explore them, find out where the information differs and why, and show how we can use these differences to gain new perspectives.

The keynote in the textual evidence is marital status,²⁹³ which is stated in the headwear, encoded in the headveil of the brides, the wives, the nuns, the prostitutes of our early medieval Frankish and Anglo-Saxon sources. It is this that is probably also visible in the more or less gender specific symbolism of the grave goods according to the region and the current vestimentary mores of each specific period. On a second plane, another common feature between our different types of sources is the social status which

²⁹² The sign to denote a woman in the sign language of monks in the *Indicia Monasterialia*, see note 270.

²⁹³ The characterisation of a woman according to the ways she fits into a male-centred society, which in Merovingian and Carolingian times translates into a very specific space and the symbolism of this space within or out of a family at a specific time on her life cycle. Brides and recently married young adult women wore veils plus ribbons or fillets in texts.

is prominently stated in both types of source material, more explicitly in the texts than in the archaeology. In the latter, the information is more ample and graphic: the evidence for burial costume can reflect the necessities of ritual, personal choice and beliefs, social competition and age and position in the life-cycle, but all these are obscured in the cases of very high-status burials by very elaborate artefacts of headwear for females of all ages.

The availability of resources and materials is seen here through the prism of the aesthetic ideals of competitive societies obsessed with display, another keynote feature, common as we saw to both textual descriptions and to the way the systems function. Display in the archaeology interplays with mores, as with the overall respect paid to the coifed dead woman.

Fashion and personal choice are the secondary stylistic statements inscribed in the information we get from the material evidence. It seems that there is some room for personal choice when someone could afford it. Fashions could circulate via commerce, communications, travel, and intermarriage between regions for the higher social levels. These also informed personal choices; such choices surface very rarely in the texts, but more often in the mortuary record.

It is only in the archaeology that we have evidence for regional identity, although not ethnic in a rigid sense, in female headwear. In our analysis here, we concentrated on an overview of Francia. The information that is missing from the sources is firstly about regional varieties of costume, secondly about the ways these varieties changed in the time-span even of the most clearly stratified burial sites, and thirdly about the ways these artefacts were worn. The texts of our period are also almost silent about the fact that a substantial portion of a middle social level of the women in the North-east and North-west of Francia and Burgundy wore large metal pins and combs in the late 5th to the late 6th century, and then smaller ones with veils, probably longer, in the 7th. Some in the South-east of Burgundy wore nets with beads in the 6th century and were the first to adopt the *sudarium* and a shroud combined with a dressed burial in the early 7th century. Little attention to headwear is however revealed in Languedoc and Brittany across our time span, with the exception of braids, whose use intensified between 600 and 700. In other geographical contexts however, the examination of headgear has revealed here to

have a far wider distribution, and more varieties,²⁹⁴ than in the North of Francia and the Rhine valley, as proposed so far²⁹⁵. The changes in these micro-regional typologies of headwear show us evolving and different regional identities, not seen in the texts. We have an idea of how these items were worn when these found *in situ*, and when conditions allow a comparative analysis of their position on a body in the context of the burial site. For comparative purposes, some data on average dimensions in similar artefacts have been adduced from other sites, although effort has been made to keep as closer as possible to the same time span. Another source was the depictions of late Roman pins under the *palla* or on top of the coiffure which were the late Antique ancestors of these pins at least in South-eastern Francia. It is indeed possible that other headwear elements, like systems of beads, or woven bands of perishable materials were used instead of gold foil strip headbands by various élites and also other strata of the localities where no fillets were ever found.

As to the contribution of the historical sources, to the material designation of secularity and belief, which are difficult to make out in the mortuary record,²⁹⁶ it is in the normative texts that we get to know about what is prescribed. In reality we know very little about actual practices, but it is worth exploring them further in the context of ecclesiastical vestimentary systems.²⁹⁷

Both *vitta* and *velum* are used by writers, both metaphorically and literally, as signifiers of social space. It is difficult to break into the codes and attempt interpretations as to what these women - élite or not- actually wore and how, why it was introduced in a

²⁹⁴ Even strange, exotic, objects with no parallels as in Perusson, Lelong, op.cit., pp. 219-231. The central location of the sarcophagus points to a member of the élite of the area. It contained the body of a female in her late forties dressed in five different textiles. The head was covered in a long silk veil of unknown colour reaching her lower back, probably a local product, for the rest of the clothing and the associated finds. See Appendix I (Frankish burials) and Appendix II (Frankish sources), Perusson.

²⁹⁵ Crowfoot E., Chadwick-Hawkes S., "Early Anglo-Saxon Gold Braids," *Medieval Archaeology* 11 (1967), pp. 42-86, the first presentation on braids including an appendix and exemplary analysis of the Anglo-Saxon archaeological textile material.

²⁹⁶ Perhaps the intensification in the use of the headveil in Northern Francia and Anglo-Saxon England in the course of the 7th century was a result of the influence of a Christian Mediterranean vestimentary system. It is difficult to prove this here on the evidence based only on the headwear, and we will return to this in an examination within the context of complete vestimentary systems in Chapter 3 and in the Conclusion.

²⁹⁷ See in the discussion of the structural elements of ecclesiastical vestimentary systems, Chapter 3, section 3.4 Lexicographical taxonomy of social roles in reference to the functions of the belt in texts, pp. 168-223.

certain way and what meaning these items actually had for their contemporaries. Nevertheless, the way headwear functioned within the clothing system shows that it must have been a very distinct non-verbal signifier, and that it was not only used by the *élites*, although these appear mostly in the written record. The special place headwear is given in descriptions of clothing and the variety of the social situations in which it is encountered when it is found in isolation in the written sources, outside a vestimentary system, means that it must have been given special attention. More evidence about the material vestiges of headwear accords with this special attention given to headwear and to its special place within a dress system: it might be that it is placed higher on the body and it is seen first; it might also be that it is closer to the face, and all its cultural, ideological and social aspects thus become more personalised than do other elements in the dress system, even if this might not be the most recurrent part of the whole and the most variable linguistically and materially, but which here was restricted to women only.

The examination of the metaphors in the shifts in meaning, the contextual analysis of the usage of these words both in systems and in isolation, and their correspondence to the information we get from the material record, when the similarities between these two sources of evidence allow us to put aside their differences, nonetheless have assisted us in breaking these codes to an extent, so as to allow us to understand some of the mental imagery and the social realities of textile artisanal objects in the early middle age.

CHAPTER THREE

A. The multiple usage of the structural elements in early medieval

Dress: Belts and girdles

In this comparative study of textiles and clothing systems of the early middle ages one has to come to terms with a bulk of empirical information, already distorted by the diverse nature of the source material. The attempts to organise wide cognitive landscapes such as this risk being either too rapid or too systemic, and result in the masking and flattening out of diversities, or else produce complex conclusions that would not add insight and would further increase the distance between early medieval realities and the present. To avoid that, in this chapter, a single axis of the structure of the clothing systems is pursued as the main line of enquiry.

First, in this chapter, we will deal with the justification of the use of a single pivotal element in the clothing systems; in order to support the argument that there is one structural key-point in dress, we are going to examine the way historical representations of early medieval dress are construed today. We will explore the issue of what is most important in these representations in terms of appearance, because the problems of interpretation set out above are nowhere to be faced more often than in the visual and verbal representations of early medieval clothing systems. To counter these problems, we will investigate a theory of hierarchy of stylistic messaging of clothing systems and will attempt to reassess it on the basis of the information we gain about the structural elements from our empirical material. The purpose of this critique is to try to establish that there is one artefact in particular, prominent in early medieval appearance, that marks out change in dress, and, subsequently, change in social identities and ideology. To start to deal with this notion, a few extant garments have been chosen so as to reconstruct and comprehend the axis of dress structure and of its semantically most important component.

This single element is the belt (or the girdle) and it remains consistent linguistically, if not morphologically, throughout our time span. It is encountered more often than anything else in the narrative sources, and it is evidenced in archaeological

contexts more often than anything else and in a very wide variety of forms. Furthermore, the evidence of extant early medieval clothes that we have shows emphasis on the waistline, even if the belt has not been retrieved.

We will discuss next, the function and the material form of the belt types encountered in the narrative source material in a set of words found in a multitude of Latin sources, and we will approach the lexicographical material within the context of the system of belts and their synonyms and their variables in meaning and use. This exemplification will be assessed from two writers of the early period, Gregory of Tours and Isidore of Seville, because they were near contemporary and influenced later writers, and because they offer us ample and contextualised information about entire systems of belting. This enquiry will help us to establish as many types of belts as possible and help place the usage of the different lexis of belting on a time-line over the span between the late 5th and the middle of the 10th century.

In the course of the presentation of the fortunes of the words *balteum*, *cingulum* and *zona* in the written sources of Merovingian and Carolingian Francia and in Anglo-Saxon England, we will also examine the information relevant to the changes in different clothing systems pertaining to categories of gender, status and secular or ecclesiastical occupation, and thus gain information about entire clothing systems.

In the subsequent examination of wills that bequeathed real belts, more personalised and specific information on early medieval realities will be added.

The survey of the archaeology of belts that gave shape to early medieval dress, including in secular and ecclesiastical contexts as relics and amulets, will next be presented, analysed and cross-examined, so we may gain a more pluralistic and functional view of the axis of clothing and test what we already know from the extant surviving garments.

At the end, I will compare the lexicographical and historical material to the archaeology of belts and girdles through a set of questions. These questions will assist this attempt to show that we gain the most information about clothing systems, the changes in them, and their meaning and ideology, when we utilise the structural element that remains the most consistent through all types of empirical evidence.

3.1 Historical reconstructions of clothing systems and the structural elements of dress.

When we try to address today the problem of what early medieval people wore in the different occasions of their lives, we can find a few modern descriptions and iconographic representations sketched in a general manner, under headings like “male” dress, “female” dress, and sometimes even “children’s” dress.

Some effort is also usually taken to incorporate information about the way clothes were adjusted onto a body, or about the parts of the dress hidden from view that we know these clothes were covering.¹ These are the practical and unavoidable problems in a two-dimensional illustration that is trying to convey visual information about three dimensional artefacts within the limits of the designers’ and the viewers’ perspective; there is always more than one option as to which angle and way is chosen to represent the layers of a shift or an undertunic invisible to the viewer.

Ideally, a representation like that,² of parts of dress we know must have existed although they were not directly visible, would be in accordance with what we know from historical and archaeological sources, and also the representations from contemporary illuminated manuscripts, ivories, etc, even if they were hidden under tunics and mantles. The main problem in doing that, even if a system combining the different types of source material could be introduced, is that the way that the clothes fitted on an individual, the waistline, the fastenings, the girding, the seams, the selvages, in all, what makes a dress textile artefact something functional, would be left to our imagination or to our common sense. To quote an example from one of the few attempts to represent Merovingian dress

¹ See in Guadagnin R., *Un village au temps de Charlemagne. Moines et Paysans de l’abbaye de Saint-Denis du VII^e siècle à l’An Mil*, (Paris, 1988), the discourse on the masculine, feminine and childrens’ vestimentary systems in the depictions of the period (pp. 345-347) and for an effort at reconstruction in a schematic, summarily but still comprehensive way, if not complete, Merovingian dress. The problem is that the Merovingian dress is reconstructed according to the rather later, Carolingian manuscript depictions (as in fig 114, p. 347). One of the problems of reconstruction of dress in Francia is that it is presented summarily in an attempt to cover a very wide time span ranging between 700-950. See ibidem, figs 112, 113, pp. 345-347, and see note 2, fig 1.

² See fig 3.1.

of a man: “the upper part of the basic male dress of Merovingian times was not worn tight, but in abundance, having multiple folds that were hanging over a belt. This belt could be made of leather fastened with a buckle, or it could be a simple band of fabric without a metallic accessory. It is very seldom visible”.³ In more or less the same way, the author goes on to describe female apparel and also attempts to guess at children’s dress. As the draping and the folding conceals the functional details and the layering of clothing which are thus never represented in a manuscript illumination, the author tries to guess at what could have been worn. Furthermore, in this rather vague, even if detailed, attempt to approach Merovingian dress in the text, no mention or problematisation of the “conditions of use”⁴ of the textiles is made.

Any description on our part would lack plausibility if there was no concern with simple functions of the textile such as the fastening, and no concern with what any non-specialised audience already knows about the most prominent finds from early medieval sites: buckles, and brooches/*fibulae*. But, apart from the simply functional elements that should be added to a description so that this can be more realistic and plausible, like the fastening and the belting of a non-extant textile around a body that also does not survive, it is when someone attempts a depiction of the whole system, that one realises that all the details that would hint at a third dimension are missing, as well as the conditions of the use of the textile and the accessories associated with it.

The problems of doing this need to be described and analysed within the very specific historical limits of the time span of the clothing ensemble in question. Usually a description reveals more about what we do not know, rather than allowing us to build up a rapport with a specific social and spatial context and to try to reconstruct the appearance of specific social groups.⁵

³ See note 1, Guadagnin, op.cit., p. 202.

⁴ The conditions of use of the textile will be understood here in a sense that encompasses both the technical aspects of a textile like its construction details, quality of material, its texture and fibres, and the social conditions, the signification and the communicative aspects of the textile.

⁵ See fig 3.2a, 3.2b, 3.2c, 3.2d, for a few reconstructions related to very specific and well-stratified archaeological contexts from closed assemblages and very well supported vestimentary solutions taking into account contemporary and spatial parallels. See fig 3.3, where the difference between interpretations of very specific material from another closed assemblage demonstrates our bias and inabilities when we ignore the clothing system not or cannot contextualise, interpret and place the finds within a clothing system.

An analysis of the conditions of the use of the textile can, however, integrate different sources of information to make the picture more three-dimensional in its attempt to present early medieval dress used at a certain time by real people as part of their living practice.

The only merit of the very few summary descriptions of the “characteristic” of male, female and children’s dress in Merovingian Gaul or Anglo-Saxon England that can be found in the current bibliography⁶ is that it informs an audience about a whole assemblage of “characteristic” artefacts, so as to enable us to identify early medieval “taste” at first glance. Because of this, the description is convincing, digestible and transmits in an explicit and direct way what we expect could not be very far from everyday practice and from the use of artefacts in a given historical reality within a very broad frame. All the same, no matter how convenient for our visual perception of an image these representations are, they still leave out a long list of factors that have to do with a more flexible and plausible interrelation of the artefactual evidence with a given historical reality and conditions.

The way to get around the problem of how these textiles were worn, under what circumstances, why and by whom, of what was their feel and their texture, which is found very rarely in the documentary sources, is obscured by all this. And it is further

⁶ Apart from Guadagnin, the depictions in the bibliography (see figs 3.2a, 3.2b, 3.2c, 3.2d, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6) in Stoodley N., *The Spindle and the Spear: a critical enquiry into the construction and meaning of gender in the early Anglo-Saxon burial rite*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 288 (1999), esp. fig 66, p. 74, fig 67, p. 75 (after Brown D., *Anglo-Saxon England*, (London, 1978), fig on p. 24) and also see Owen-Crocker G., *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2004), fig 10, p. 38, fig 33, p. 47, figs 51-52, p. 73, fig 72, p. 101, fig 81, p. 120, fig 200, p. 247 and pls D, E, F, G. For more reconstructions some of which are based mostly on specific burials see Walton-Rogers P., *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England AD 450-700*, CBA Research Report 145, (York, 2007), pp. 167, 168, 173, 181, 182, 183, 185, 190, 206, 215, 216, and Speed G., Walton-Rogers P., “A Burial of a Viking Woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire,” *Medieval Archaeology* 48 (2004), pp. 51-88, fig 17, p. 79. See vol II, figs 3.4, 3.5, 3.6. The above scholars attempt to address the problems of reconstruction of a specific and probably ideal female dress and much less often male dress, as found in a burial from an excavated site. They try to evaluate the evidence from usually a single case study, and the ensuing interpretations correspond to the data of the burial and are in close reference to the inventory of the site and to the original find drawings in each case. Still there are some problematic areas in the interpretations, such as the differences between burial costume and everyday dress. This shows very much in the different attempts at the two conflicting reconstructions of the “Aregundis” burial costume in *Die Franken. Wegbereiter Europas*, (Mainz, 1996), p. 683, fig 556. See fig 3.3. The burial costume may comprise the ideal dress type of the contemporaries in the specific site and period, or reflect a stage-managed rite with very well constructed symbolic dress elements - so we today have little insight in what happened in reality. To complicate the matter further, the reconstructions above leave out the possibility that some of the artefacts and textiles were not worn but deposited as offerings on the bier.

downplayed in our efforts to depict it, if we focus all our attention on the superficially most prominent elements from the point of view of visibility and importance, that is the metalwork accessories, only because in most cases these are all that survives in a burial context, or as relics, or as bits of information in the written sources. The problem of the conditions of use of textiles is still not addressed, as there is no immediately obvious way to contextualise the other elements of dress in a hierarchy and work out their interrelations, their place in the clothing system and their meaning. Perhaps the task is particularly elusive because people are looking for a complete and informed picture of dress of all social groups, when no such thing ever existed in reality. To avoid falling into this pitfall, here the term “dress” will be used to denote everyday dress worn in a locality in a given time, by a real person, be it regional and rural dress, secular or ecclesiastical, or court dress, and will be set against the term “costume”, meaning the apparel that serves a given function ascribed to a specific social role, like, for example a burial costume, a military costume, a wedding costume, a royal coronation costume or the clerical costume worn at ecclesiastical ordination or worn at the celebration of the mass.

If we return to the brief description by Guadagnin mentioned above, what is communicated in a very general manner is what we think we can see in a number of somewhat later depictions from illuminated manuscripts, combined selectively with the general information we gather from a generic overview of the archaeology of Gaul: a stereotypical basic appearance of a Merovingian or Carolingian man or woman. Both the information and the hypotheses (based on what we admit we will never be able to guess) result in our using too much from what we do not need to know, while we are actually processing very little information that is specific in terms of time, place, social and gender distinctions and the social role of the individual. Making a very small allowance for individualised taste and fashion, such a representation portrays in a general and at the same time very limited manner, someone who might be from any walk of life. This blur of information results from the misuse and misunderstanding of different systems of communication, and all these obstacles can be present even in one pretty basic sketch.

If we take the picture seriously, we become accomplices with the designer of the sketch and the writer in a departure from reality: the material record pins down the

remnants of both individual and collective identities, while in the representation we are portraying someone who has never existed and might not be able to exist. The fundamental problem here is that this imagery, even though it is homogeneous and easy to grasp, is only a constructed stereotypical image of people in a generic social and historical sense. The evidence about the collective and individual identities that is found in the material record is not organised in a systematic manner. In the following, we are going to explore whether a historically valid verbal and visual representation of a vestimentary system can be possible, and how.

In order to show this, as already stated, I will focus on one factor that is crucial to both the construction of a garment, and its visual, aesthetic and communicative aspects. Out of a cultural system of dress I will extract what is arguably its most important structural element, the belt and the waistline, in order to examine its linguistic and archaeological conditions of use, its social signifiers in reference to the rest of a vestimentary system. The waistline, including the artefacts worn around the waist, is emphasized explicitly in some of the few extant surviving garments; it is there as a surviving artefact in a good number of leather, woven, tablet-woven and composite belts and girdles, surviving in waterlogged sites, in rural cemeteries, or as relics; and it is there in its absence: in the metallic buckles and girdles and girdle accessories and hangers so prominent in the period of the furnished burials. It is also referred to frequently in texts, as *cingulum* or *balteum*, and it is an important cultural signifier in its own right.

3. 2 A few case studies of extant surviving garments with exceptional cut and emphasis on the waistline

Here, it is important to comment on the functional and the stylistic messages that are communicated first in the verbal description of clothing which also expresses modern writers' reception of the source material and its visualisation. Very often, in an effort to generalise and still be precise, the verbal descriptions by modern writers of textiles associated with the body are given in a two-dimensional way, following the contours of the two-dimensional design. But we know from the primary sources, especially from the material remains as in the rare cases of extant real garments,⁷ that these were made, tailored and stitched, then worn, deposited or discarded in three dimensions, and that there is more to what we see. Sometimes the author of the modern description feels obliged to hint at this. The constructional details when available, regarding the sewing and stitching of the garments, supply us with enough information to understand how the fragments fitted together⁸ and sometimes the extent of the layering, in exceptional cases. The surviving data, although few and far between in terms of time and provenance, can support an attempt on our part to approach the development of different cuts, designs and

⁷ A number of extant garments from a wide range of regional contexts, covering the whole span of the Early Middle Ages, have been recovered either from waterlogged sites or as relics. Into this first category falls the late 9th or more probably early 10th century linen embroidered shift or chemise from Llan-gors Crannóg, preserving selvages, seams, gores, hem, belt loop end other constructional details. See Granger-Taylor H. and Pritchard F., "A Fine Quality Insular Embroidery from Llan-gors Crannóg, near Brecon", in Redknap M., Edwards N., Youngs S., Lane A., Knight J., (eds.), *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, (Oxford, 2001), pp. 91-99, see fig 7. In the second category of the preserved relics belong the extant but fragmentarily preserved relics of the dalmatic of St Cuthbert and its belt, braided borders and *stola*, see Granger-Taylor, H., "The weft-patterned silks and their braid: the remains of an Anglo-Saxon dalmatic of c.800 ?", in Bonner G. et alii (eds.), *Saint Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to AD 1200*, (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 303-327. We are excluding here the Scandinavian textile finds from the geographically and temporally diverse contexts to the above examples as from Birka, Överhogdal, Skog, Haithabu, Osenberg See Bender-Jørgensen L., *North European Textiles until AD 1000*, (Aarhus, 1992), pp. 38-59, 136-138, 159-179 passim, and Bender-Jørgensen L., Munksgaard E., (eds.), *Archaeological Textiles in Northern Europe*, (Copenhagen, 1992), pp. 117-27.

⁸ As in the case of the stitching and seaming of the embroidered probably Welsh linen chemise at Llan-gors, see note 7, Granger-Taylor, Pritchard, "A Fine Quality Insular Embroidery from Llan-gors Crannóg", pp. 95-98, and also the design and lay-out of the shift named "La Grande Robe" from Chelles, See Laporte, Boyer, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 205, p. 47 for the pattern and cut.

garment construction according to changing fashion, at least in the cases when we happen to have the garments and we can thus attempt safer reconstructions of the style and the most important structural axis of the garment.

Evidence for this is scanty, but existent nevertheless. One example is the extraordinary early 9th century linen gown preserved at Chelles in Northern France, deposited during the translation of Saint Balthild's relics in 833, discussed in Chapter 2: the so-called "Grande Robe", deriving from a Frankish monastic context in all probability.⁹ The gown is made of linen, and cut on a complex pattern: it has strange triangular pieces inserted in the middle of the back and half triangles coming down from either side of the neck as well as gores in the sides of the skirt and extra triangular cut material to make the skirt fuller. It is a light-weight piece cut out from one length of cloth of 6.80 m in length and 85 cm of width and reaching to the feet (it is 1.68 cm long). The weave has a composite pattern, the sleeves are long and wide, and, because they are well preserved, we have evidence for the first time that they become narrow at the wrist. The garment is indeed very wide and full with a waistline accentuated by side seams stitched with very fine quality Z-ply threads. There is evidence that it was pleated at the shoulders.

Some of these characteristics are shared by two other artefacts.¹⁰ One is the so-called "Dress of the Virgin", allegedly bought by Charlemagne for the Cathedral of Aachen and still on display there.¹¹ This is a textile of an earlier date than the "Robe of

⁹ See note 8, Laporte-Boyer, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 205, pp. 22-34 and Vol II, fig 3.8.

¹⁰ See figs 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10.

¹¹ Verhecken-Lammens C., De Jonghe D., "Technical report", in Paredis-Vroom M., Verhecken-Lammens C., De Jonghe D., "The major relics of Aachen cathedral," *Bulletin de Liaison du Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens* 73 (1995/1996), pp. 14-26. Concerning the provenance of this textile, there is some information about Charlemagne being in contact with Byzantine messengers including a monk from the Blachernae church in 789, mentioned in ibidem, p. 15, and Muthesius A., *Byzantine Silk weaving*, (Vienna, 1997), p. 119. These both mention the possibility that the tunic of the Virgin in the report, could have been purchased by Charlemagne. The researchers of the publication of this tunic, claim that "since the 8th century, no source mentions a garment of the Virgin in Byzantium", but the Byzantine sources (Leo the Grammarian, *Chronographia*, Migne P., (ed.), PG 108, 500, 241, 8, Theophanes Continuatus. 674.23,38; *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, (ed.), Delehaye H., (Brussels, 1902), p. 793, 5-9) mention the miracles, celebrations and processions of a similar relic in the 9th and until well into the 10th century; it saves the besieged City from the Rus and the Bulgarians; it seems that a relic with the similar description never left Blachernai in the first place. It is of note that the term to describe the relic which is kept in a box is "μαφόριον", that means a headveil in the Greek original, while the Latin translation of the texts translate as "vestem ac pallium" or "palliolo nimium ac veste" which describes something similar to the Aachen dress of the Virgin.

Chelles”, probably made in Francia between the 7th and the early 9th century. This can be supported on parallel evidence because it not only displays the same structural characteristics as the Chelles “Grand Robe”, such as being cut to shape (the length of the tunic is 153 cm and its width on one side varies between 92 cm and 132 cm), having gores at the side seams, and with a similar make up using elaborate seams with sewing threads of the same ply and spin direction,¹² but it also has the same rarely found Z-direction spin patterning which creates checks on the surface of both fabrics.

In previous scholarly discussion, it has been suggested that there was a possibility that this tunic was bought by Charlemagne from the Church of Blachernai in Constantinople in 789,¹³ based on information that the emperor was in contact with Byzantine messengers at that date. Still, there is not a single mention in the sources about such a relic. What is more, the technical characteristics of the weave and its spin direction are of a late antique or early medieval western composite textile type, specifically a spin-patterned tabby linen fabric, which according to the technical report¹⁴ and what we know about this type so far¹⁵ is usually found from Migration-period contexts (mid 4th c.) and onwards. Textiles of this kind give the impression of a pattern imitating a simple damask appearance, creating checks, even when no composite weave of that type is really employed.¹⁶ In all probability this is a Frankish product, probably brought to Aachen by Charlemagne, as its weave pattern shows it could have been produced anywhere between Alamannia and Northern Gaul earlier than the late 8th century, between the late 4th –late 8th centuries. However its constructional details –and definitely not the probably fabricated story of its connection to late 8th century Constantinople- point towards the

¹² The seams of both garments are made up with S-ply of 2 Z-spun sewing threads, a further proof of the fine quality of construction of the garment. (See the Aachen robe: Verheeken-Lammens and De Jonghe, op.cit., note 11, p. 25, and for Chelles Chasuble: see Laporte, Boyer, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 205, p. 47) . The only difference between them is that the Aachen tunic has small slits at the bottom of the side seams, See figs 3.9, 3.10.

¹³ See Verheeken-Lammens, De Jonghe, op.cit., note 11, p. 15, and Muthesius, op.cit., note 11, p. 119.

¹⁴ See note 11, Verheeken-Lammens, De Jonghe, esp. pp. 23-26. Other surviving examples of Z-linen spin-patterned tabby are: the lining of one of the two dalmatics of St. Ambrose, dated at the end of the 4th century, and preserved in Milan, see Granger-Taylor H., “The two Dalmatics of St Ambrose ? ” *Bulletin de Liaison du Centre International d’ Étude des Textiles Anciens* 57-58 (1983), pp. 127-173, esp. p. 145, a part of the lining of the relics of the Saints Harlindis and Relindis dated in the 8th century, preserved at the church of Maaseik in Belgium, according to the analysis of D. De Jonghe, in Verheeken-Lammens C., De Jonghe D., “Technical report ”, p. 26 , and finally the chasuble known as “Grande Robe” at Chelles, dated in the early 9th century according to Laporte, Boyer, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 205, p. 47.

¹⁵ Bender-Jørgensen L., *North European Textiles, AD 1000* , (Aarhus, 1992), p. 53, 67-72, 83, passim.

¹⁶ See figs 3.10, 3.11.

late Merovingian-early Carolingian period. The other known surviving examples with this weave, apart from the “Grand Robe” of Chelles, are the lining of one of the dalmatics of St Ambrose in Milan, dated to the late 4th century,¹⁷ and a part of the lining of the relics of the Anglo-Saxon saints of Frankish Maaseik, Harlindis and Relindis, dated to the 8th century.¹⁸ These are not extant garments, however, but linings, and we cannot use them as a basis for comparison to the “Dress of the Virgin”, beyond recognising the similar weave type. The time span of all surviving samples of this weaving technique appears to be between the late 4th and the 9th century. The only garment, complete in its entirety, that shares both similar sewing construction details and similar weave is the Chelles textile, so in all probability, the Aachen textile must have been constructed between the 7th and the early 9th century.

The constructional details of the white linen tunic of Aachen with whitework embroidered decoration, are the gores in the side seams and under the arms. Those are also characteristics shared with the third similar artefact, the later (and more precisely dated) embroidered Llan-gors garment of the early 10th century, from South Wales.¹⁹ This last preserves seams and selvages and also a “pair of eyelets, functional rather than decorative, positioned at the broad end of a wide panel of embroidery”.²⁰ These could be loops for holding large buttons, or for the insertion of a belt or a girdle.

No reconstruction has been attempted for the artefact from the site in South Wales, despite its good state of preservation. This may be due to the fact that it is not preserved in its entirety, but on only one side, and we therefore cannot speculate about its original length and subsequently about its use as a tunic or a shirt in a clothing system. The technical report of its weave and sewing details is nonetheless closely comparable to that of the non-insular “Dress of the Virgin” of Aachen which is preserved in its entirety and it is actually a long linen undertunic that was probably long-sleeved; the same was maybe true for Llan-gors.

¹⁷ Granger-Taylor H., “The two Dalmatics of St Ambrose ?” *Bulletin de Liaison du Centre International d’Étude des Textiles Anciens* 57-58 (1983), pp. 127-173.

¹⁸ Verhecken- Lammens, De Jonghe, op.cit., note 11, “Technical report”, p. 26.

¹⁹ See note 7, Granger-Taylor H., Pritchard F., “A Fine Quality Insular Embroidery from Llan-gors Crannóg, near Brecon”, in Redknapp M., Edwards N., Youngs S., Lane A., Knight J., (eds.), *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, (Oxford, 2001), pp. 91. See fig 7.

²⁰ See Granger-Taylor and Pritchard, op. cit., note 7, p. 98.

The archaeological evidence of the crannóg, the extent of the defense-system and its construction, the variety of the artefacts manufactured on the site and the high quality items found there, all suggest that Llan-gors crannóg was a royal site; it has been identified with the late 9th century royal residence of the rulers of Brycheiniog.²¹ The most remarkable find from it is the above-mentioned carbonised embroidered linen garment, deposited in the water of the crannóg, and it is certain that it came from a secular, non-burial context. In the case of the Llan-gors crannóg embroidery, fine silk embroidery on a needlework background that was meant possibly for secular use, any gold thread is markedly absent. The absence of gold wiring and the use of silk stitching can be explained on the basis of its function. The embroidery stands out considerably on a very lightweight linen garment, and the latter has signs of wear and tear at some places near the embroidery. All the same, embroidery on gold would have been too heavy for the fabric. An ecclesiastical garment, a royal tunic or an embroidered overtunic like the one the wearer of the “Arnegundis” ring wore,²² or other kinds of garment meant for some kind of ritual use, would normally be as heavy as the cloth would permit, but would not have been needed to be worn very often; the Llan-gors garment was apparently a more normal dress item.

Another factor, which is visible here because of the rare recovery and conservation of this high-status garment, is the artistic value of the piece, which brings us new information on the skill of the artisan and on possible innovations in technique. These include the maybe fashionable pattern, the crouched stitching, and the non-surviving colouring, which are other elements that could be as important as gold and silver wire, and appropriate to adorn a royal robe. Factors like that are usually lost for ever, and this should remind us how arbitrary are our criteria when we decide on

²¹ See Campbell E., Lane A., “Llangorse: a 10th century royal crannog in Wales,” *Antiquity* 63 (1989), pp. 675-81, p. 80: “...at present, Llangorse is unique as a crannóg in Wales, however crannógs tend to be found by people who look for them and a serious research in the shallow lakes in Wales may produce further examples.”, and Redknapp M., “Insular non-ferrous metalwork from Wales of the 8th to the 10th centuries”, in Bourke C., (ed.) *From the Isles of the North. Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, (Belfast, 1995), pp. 59-73. For the documentation of an identification with the *Brecenanmere* royal site of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and its destruction in the year 916 by Æthelflæd’s Mercian army, see Whitelock D., (trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Revised Translation*, (London 1961), s.a. 916., and Davies W., *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, (Leicester, 1982), p. 114 about a charter which includes in the list of witnesses, king Tewdwr, ruler of Brycheiniog at the time of the Mercian attack in the second decade of the 10th century.

²² Fleury M., Lanord M.F., “Bijoux et parures mérovingiens de la reine Arégonde, belle-fille de Clovis, découverts à Saint-Denis,” *Les dossiers de l’archéologie* 32, jan-fév 1979, pp. 45-48.

favouring one out of a range of sources of information. It is possible that other systems of marking,²³ dyes such as madder or indigo, woad, greenweed, clubmoss, cochineal²⁴ for example, or stitches, now lost, could serve in different clothing systems to codify complex information about provenance, likes, dislikes and professions, as much as the costliness of the fabric or the jewels worn with it.

Another factor we have to take into consideration is the possibility that this shirt was not produced on site but bought from abroad. The usual criteria for attestation of product mobility are the weave type and the style of decoration. This is a linen twill s/z but it does not have a distinct pattern to connect it with the usual Continental composite patterns that are found in a large proportion of good quality clothing in Frankish and Alamannic contexts.²⁵ The embroidery is executed in the technique of crouched stitching, that was common in the period, mostly in Continental contexts as in the Chasuble of Chelles.²⁶ The focus of decoration was not on the weave pattern but on a

²³ There is an interesting passage in the life of St Radegunde, (Fortunatus Venantius, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2., 1, 6, 15, p. 367) where there is a description of a “*cilicium sigillatum*”, a literally stamped hairshirt of a woman pilgrim which the queen treasured and wore next to her skin: “*Diebus vero quadragisimae satis est scire qualiter se reteggit, inter vestes regias singulariter paenitens. Igitur, adpropinquante ieiunii tempore, mittens ad religiosam Piam nomine monacham, qui sancto proposito illa dirigebat veneranter in linteo sigillatum cilicium; quod sancta induens ad corpus, per totam quadragesimam subter veste regia dulci portabat in sarcina.*” Fortunatus, *Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Poet Antiquiss* 4, 1, 6, 10.

For a discussion of the possibilities of this kind of decoration and other alternatives in the interpretation of “*sigillatum*” such as interwoven motifs, tapestry weaving, embroidery with coloured threads, or stamped with a dye and a colour fixant, see in Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures, on the variety of composite weaves and dyes available in the early middle ages.

²⁴ Archaeologically attested substances used for dying in the early middle ages: Isatis tinctoria, (woad), the indirubine variety for red, possibly several substances based on indigotine, extracted from the blue variety of woad again, (which is the only dye that is impossible to trace in a lab and cannot prove its use, but the plant was known to have been used from the narrativer sources), madder (*rubia tinctorum*) for red, *genista tinctoria* (greenweed) for yellow, *diphysium complanatum*, (clubmoss) an aluminium absorbing plant that can yield a bright green, (found mostly in Viking contexts in Danelaw after the early 9th century), cochineal from the insect *dactylopius coccus* for a number of red and reddish-brown. See the varieties of the dyes in Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures.

²⁵ Cf the statistical analysis of the large proportions of patterned weaves found in total of Frankish and Alamannic preserved textiles in Bender-Jørgensen, *North European Textiles until AD 1000*, (Aarhus, 1992), pp. 76- 146 and compare that with the evidence for the statistical proportion of such weaves in Anglo-Saxon contexts, pp. 26-40.

²⁶ The embroidery on the Chasuble of Balthild is in crouched stitching technique, not as common in Anglo-Saxon England as the stem stitching, as evidenced from all three surviving and analysed embroidery styles from insular contexts as on a cuff on a inner gown from Sutton Hoo Sf9 Mount 14, a piece from inside a relic box from a 7th century burial (B71) from Kempston Bd1, and on embroidery adhering to a knife in a male burial at Kingsworthy Park Ha 5 G75 (see Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 6, pp. 101-103).

unique style of embroidery, that still remains without a parallel to this day.²⁷ On this basis, even if we do not have more evidence for Welsh textile patterns and the local production of composite weaves in Wales, there is a strong possibility that this garment, worn by the nobility and probably not meant for ceremonial purposes,²⁸ was a local product.

In the original publication, the Llan-gors textile is compared to the gown at Chelles. This last Frankish product, more of which survives, is much wider and has a much clearer lay-out than the other two examples. All three garments vary in the context of their place and time, in fact. But they all share some constructional details, tailoring, form and up to a point, function. All three garments, from a period stretching between the 7th and the early 10th century, preserve silken cords at the outside of the seams under the arms. They also share the above mentioned technical similarities, although the form and the function of these garments within a wider clothing system - longer or shorter linen tunics; underskirts or shifts of fine quality fabric - could have been slightly different; and they do not share a common provenance, as the third item is not Frankish but probably Welsh. They are all of fine fabric, probably worn next to the skin as a shirt or an undertunic, as the first or second layer of a clothing system. Nevertheless, the waistline seems to be important in all of them, and in all probability all were worn with a belt.

The final result in a reconstruction of the Llan-gors garment, or the Chelles shirt, turns out to be a representation of high status garments for women, which have been made in a highly articulated manner, using an elaborate cut, weave, construction, and decorative details with emphasis on the waist and secondarily on the collar and the hem; all this establishes these artefacts as unique. The researchers of the Llan-gors publication

²⁷ Despite the obvious skill of Anglo-Saxon court and convent embroiderers, there is no evidence for a parallel "folk" or Welsh embroidery tradition so we have only this unique style to consider as a possibility for local Welsh production.

²⁸ We should consider the great scarcity of embroidery work in the surviving cemeteries of communities in Anglo-Saxon England and to a lesser extent in Francia, apart from the cases where relics are concerned, as in a 7th century female grave at Dunstable, Marina Drive, see Appendix II, n° 18 and Crowfoot E., "Textile fragments from "relic-boxes" in Anglo-Saxon graves", in Walton P., Wild J.P.(eds.), *Textiles in Northern Archaeology, NESAT III: Textile Symposium in York 6-9 May 1987*, North European Symposium for Archaeological Textiles Monograph 3, (London, 1990), pp. 47-56. It is probable that embroidery was regarded as a distinguished feature of the nobility as in early Irish literature, see Bitel I.M., *Land of Women: Tales of Sex and Gender from Early Ireland*, (Ithaca and London, 1996), p. 128.

state that “clothing construction towards the end of the first millennium was relatively fluid”.²⁹ The same fluidity is argued for at the end of the description of the garment vestiges of a late 9th-century burial of a woman in Yorkshire, dressed in a Scandinavian style strap-dress, an underdress and apron.³⁰ Remains of three woollen textiles, all different in texture, in different shades of the same colour, in blue hues, have been preserved in association with the iron pins on the back of the brooches in the grave. In contrast to the three previous cases, no extant garment survives. Loopholes, cords and gores are evidenced here, however, as well. The fragmentary evidence leaves much to the imagination, as to the exact kind of tubular strap-dress the woman was wearing, or the layering of the garments. This does indeed leave room for a fluid interpretation, although the axis here is on the collar, along the brooches worn under the collar bone, and not the waistline. If we compare the extant tunics to this, is it possible to discern here the influence of fashion in the constructional details and the cut, when showing evidence of entirely different traditions?

I partly agree with the term “fluidity” used by researchers to characterize garment construction during the last centuries of the early middle ages, if it is meant to signify the search for new forms and the circulation of new clothing systems, such as transitional forms of dress between wide and tight, with novel constructional solutions, which are encountered, as we saw previously, in the regionally diverse and coexistent vestimentary idioms in use in the 7th -10th centuries. On the other hand, after the eighth century we do not have as many extant textiles which might have preserved constructional details from the previous period, and this creates a bias in the quality of information we have on the late Anglo-Saxon, Carolingian periods and the corresponding Welsh and Viking ones. I think that we have here only snapshots of fashions forming, something which happened in any period; and that the term “fluidity” should be avoided because it reflects more our interpretational fluidity and much less early medieval clothing construction. The term,

²⁹ See Granger-Taylor, Pritchard, op.cit., note 7, p. 99.

³⁰ Speed G., Walton-Rogers P., “A Burial of a Viking Woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire,” *Medieval Archaeology* 48 (2004), pp. 51-88, see fig 3. 6. It is reasonable to associate this probable strap-dress in this locality with Scandinavian dress. There is some evidence for strap-dress or a similar arrangement in Normandy as well in Herouvillette, (6th -late 7th century) for some of the women, see Appendix II, Normandy sites, and Vron, (5th -late 8th century), Austrasian -Rhineland sites, but the temporal contexts are too early for comparisons with the York woman.

nevertheless, can be used for the period between the 7th and the 10th centuries in the transitional sense discussed above.

What is attested, in this case, is probably a change in the way garments were made and worn; but in each garment so far discussed, the loops and holes probably secured a belt, and the accentuation in cut and shape is still on the waist, so the belting remains crucial even in its absence. We can see this most clearly in the contrast with the clothing system of the Yorkshire burial on the previous page, which has a different structural axis. At least two of the garments that we have are cut on a pattern utilising all the cut pieces from one length of cloth; this contrasts with the late antique, Byzantine and also Viking practice of making a garment that is woven to size in its entirety. In addition to that, the surviving garments are evidence that at least élite women in northern Francia and Wales at this period wore elaborate undertunics and this attests to the layering of garments in a complex vestimentary system. All these probably are signs of a changes in the vestimentary systems of the period, as we shall see further on.

The descriptions of real artefacts are set out here to illuminate the problems, the possibilities of, and the contrast between, our attempts to describe three-dimensional clothes, style and details and the reality, even in the two Frankish cases where it is possible to compare and contrast fashions within a not very broad time span of (probably) under 100 years. We have to keep in mind also that these clothes were worn or meant to be worn by real women who probably belonged to the Merovingian/Carolingian aristocracy and probably the Welsh royalty and that there is no way we can prove that these are representative or typical of the clothes worn outside these gender and status specific contexts. The robes are part of clothing systems - the female undertunic or dress of at least some of the élites of Francia, Wales and perhaps elsewhere. They were not found in obscure contexts, however, and it is possible that other clothes like that were worn by their female contemporaries.

For the men of the same period we can deploy the 8th-century manuscript representations from the Stuttgart Psalter, and some others of the 9th and 10th centuries, to support the argument that the secular clothes of both the working classes and the aristocracy are depicted as not very loose but with a drapery quite close to the body, and

almost always tucked up at the waist with a cord or a sash.³¹ No buckle is ever seen in these depictions of the 8th-10th centuries; the fastening elements are the brooches on the cloak, and the latter is always open to show off the tunic, which is usually decorated with bands at collar and hems for the élites. It seems that the waistline is equally important to both genders in this period (even if buckles are only rarely evidenced in the material record, and even then they are small and discrete); but, for the women, it is much more accentuated and ornamented. The combined evidence of manuscript illustrations³² and the garments from Northern Francia and Wales shows that these were probably cut to shape and girded on the woman's body, on the waist axis so as to show it off, with additional fabric at the seams to give it relative freedom of movement, with fuller skirts at least in two examples, so as to mark out affluence and gendered anatomical features, and in this particular way to make the underpinning of social status, and the life-cycle social map of the individual, more legible.

In the extant garments, we have a basic form which is wide but not too far from the human body. These patterned, elaborately seamed garments, cut to shape, contrast with some other preconceptions of 7th-10th century garments: that is to say, a general view of medieval clothing before the year 1100 as comprising of very loose, heavily ornamented, long flowing robes with metal bands or studs stuck on, of a low standard of construction, and without detailed execution, for technical choices were supposed to be poor. In such preconceptions the structural axis of the vestimentary systems is absent.

Our surviving garments, on the contrary, show considerable articulation and careful construction, focused on waist and/or collar. The Frankish robes attest to an elaborate spin-patterned weave, creating checks, which can be linked to longstanding weaving techniques in western Europe. The gores and the extra fabric added from the waist below the hem in these, the peculiar sleeves and neckline, the very fine embroidery

³¹ See fig 3.12 (Stuttgart Psalter, (Cat 108), folio 97v^o) of the 8th century, probably Echternach, depicting brick-makers, and fig 3. 13, (Bibliothèque Vaticane, ms Reg. Lat. 438, folio 18) depiction of a mower, fig 3. 14 (London, British Library MS Harley 603, fol 66v: Psalm 127 (128) :1-3) of the 10th century depicting builders, monks aristocrats, royalty.

³² See fig 3.15 (Stuttgart Psalter, (Cat 108), fol. 57 v), fig 3.16 (ibid, fol. 58r); fig 3.17, depictions of women with belts or sashes on tunics with pleated pattern on the front, and long veils at the end of 8th century in the Genoels-Elderen Diptych, fig 3.18 more depictions of women, wearing girdles over a tunic visible under the mantle and brooch from the Stuttgart Psalter c. 800 (After Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 6, ibidem, fig 5, p. 177).

in the Aachen and the Welsh examples, illustrate the need for elegance, complexity and sophistication in the court cultures of the period, and presumably these were visible in the outer layer of clothing too. We cannot reconstruct the entire clothing system on this evidence alone, but even with one extract of the system we can tell a lot about its use and function within the system and in society.

In the above case studies, we can say something about the cut of élite female clothing, which may be belted and certainly has an accentuated waist-line. It seems to characterize a substantial period when this fashion or construction spread and was popularised. At least for this length of time, the waist-line seems to have been the primary axis of the élite vestimentary system. In most earlier cases, notably in the time of the furnished burials, the information we have about the shape of the garment or the way it was worn is much more difficult to assess, as it comes in the absence of the garment. With respect to belts and girdles, it is only the imprint behind the buckle-plate³³ that exists to remind us of a very important part in the way early medieval people wanted to perceive their body, their appearance and themselves. We know that belts were seen as important, because of the stress on them in the literary sources that will be examined below. What will be explored in the rest of this chapter is the usage of textiles (and leather) within the study of one of the structural elements of dress in the specific conditions its use, that is, belts and girdles; and we will examine possibilities for change in the vestimentary systems on this basis.

We are going to test whether and how we can learn more about dress when we are trying to reconstruct and comprehend these textiles using information from written texts from the late 5th to the early 10th century and the archaeology of the

³³ In the late 5th-6th century burial evidence, there are some softer woven girdles which were worn instead of a leather belt, in Hirst S. M., *An Anglo-Saxon Inhumation cemetery at Sewerby, East Yorkshire*, (York, 1985), pp. 48, grave 38/ 6-7, p. 48, and pp. 53-54. Also the rectangular, perforated type of belt could have been attached on something tablet-woven and colourful, made of either woven cloth or dyed leather. It has been suggested that : "Probably the leather provided the strength, the textile the colour" (Owen-Crocker, op.cit., note 6, p. 152). Organic remains attached to openwork buckles of a style popular around the end of the 6th century were found in Northern Francia and across the Pyrenées (e.g. Estagel, see Lantier R., "Le cimetière wisigothique d' Estagel: fouilles de 1935-36," *Gallia* 7 (1949), pp. 159-160, esp. p. 182), also another example found in a woman's grave at Burwell, Cambridgeshire, see Grave 72, in Lethbridge T.C., *Recent excavations in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 2nd Series 3 (Cambridge, 1931), p. 60. These examples show that the belt could be a combination of leather, metal, textile and tablet-woven braid at the same time. Usually, as in some continental cemeteries, due to the good preservation conditions only the metallic part and sometimes the textile impression of the braid, or some vestiges of a leather belt are preserved.

garments and belt that survive. We will look at the belts that gave them shape found in secular use, as relics, and in categories in between such as the amuletic and apotropaic or prophylactic use of belts and related objects. Finally, we will look at the hints at the axis of the dress which are implied by the different uses and forms of belts and girdles in furnished burials, until the middle of the 7th century in Anglo-Saxon England, Francia, Lombard Italy and Frisia and until the 9th century in early Carolingian Germany.³⁴ This will allow us to draw conclusions about the role of belts, and the waistline in general, in vestimentary systems, which will parallel those deduced from the few surviving garments; and I will discuss this at the end of the chapter.

3. 3 A brief critique of stylistic criteria and hierarchies of artefact values

Archaeological analysis and discourse on the subject of early medieval dress has gone on for years, and has developed through the study of the most visible and prominent metalwork elements found in burials, placing both shoulder *fibulae* and types of buckles in seriality classes and types; this results in most cases in presentations of dress accessories,³⁵ and not in attempts to reconstruct a clothing system. These elements are seldom integrated in a systemic way in the vestimentary systems of the period in

³⁴ Stein F., "Pre-Carolingian Graves in South Germany, " *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Third Series 31, (1968), pp. 1-18.

³⁵ See Curta F., "Female dress and "Slavic"bow fibulae in Greece, " *Hesperia* 74 (1) (2005), pp. 101-143.

question, and the documentary sources are not used to to supplement the archaeological information on usage, meaning, variety of form and articulation of the fastening elements, and of the clothes which are usually non-retrievable.

In the information exchange between what we think is plausible and the actual data from the written record, the material record and the historiography and archaeological analysis that we already have at our disposal, it has been argued that there must be a key feature that would enable us to organise visual stylistic information in a hierarchical way. It has been suggested by Martin Wobst in an influential article that visibility is the key feature of stylistic messaging by dress.³⁶ His evidence was built on the premise that the articulation of artifacts in information exchange is definable, when we are given the systemic context and its formal variability;³⁷ and he addressed and utilised stylistic behaviour as a strategy of information exchange in an effort to overcome the shortcomings of stylistic analysis. In order to interpret the articulation of artifact variability in archaeological assemblages, he evaluated the hierarchy of stylistic behaviour against a set of ethnographic materials from Albanian, Hungarian, Serbian, Croatian and Romanian folk-dress and its messaging distribution. He argued that the earlier a dress item becomes visible over long distances to a social group, and the higher it is located on the body, the more important it is in stylistic messaging. For Wobst, the most important elements were the headdress and, for males, the coat or cloak. The other items that could be differentiated at intermediate distances were skirts, shirts, jackets, trousers and belts; these and others could become visible at short range and were placed second in the hierarchy. Elements of shape, function and value, or of different interpretational systems and interactions in this messaging system across different social groups, were not discussed.

³⁶ Wobst M., "Stylistic behaviour and information exchange," *Anthropological Papers* 61 (1977), pp. 329-35, and for further use of this concept when assessing metalwork accessories hierarchies in association to measuring wealth from graves: see Owen-Crocker G.R., "Gold in the ground or Just Rust in the Dust: Measuring Wealth by Metalwork in Anglo-Saxon Graves", in Bork, R., (ed.), *De Re Metallica*, (Ashgate, 2005), pp. 15-29, esp. 22-25.

³⁷ See note 36, Wobst, pp. 321-323. In this he admitted the influence of Binford (Binford L.S., and Binford S.R., "A preliminary analysis of functional variability in the Mousterian of Levallois facies," Item in *Recent studies in paleoanthropology*, Clark, J.D., Howell, F.C., (eds.), *American Anthropologist* 68/2 (1966), pp. 238-295). This concept can be useful to set out paradigms, but it is mechanistical and dysfunctional in the actual interpretation of artefacts from archaeological assemblages, where both systemic contexts and the variability of form are very rarely fully evidenced. This problem is faced today by more rounded interdisciplinary approaches.

This criterion, of visibility and eminence, was used in the example of the reconstruction of a typical Merovingian male dress at the beginning of this chapter, where, with all its merits and pitfalls, our attention was drawn implicitly to the clasping and fastening elements in the costume, and it was assumed that there were hierarchical factors of visibility, which mattered. Other important factors that could have been combined with this - the functionality and availability of a material, cost, the distance from the place of manufacture to the place of consumption, or the value of the artistic work on the material - could also help us to tell which part of a clothing system was more important and prominent. Wobst nonetheless argued that the things worn on the head, or the shoulders, and secondarily around the waist, outrank all the others. This hierarchical organisation seems to me arbitrary, and tied to a number of specific conditions. Wobst was careful in the assignment of ranking between the three most important elements of visual significance in dress. He also assumed that rarity of evidence is a sign of importance, although arguably the opposite is more accurate; the best-documented element could well be the best discriminator.

Wobst pointed out that things worn on the head, for example, are much rarer than things around the waist, in the material record at least. This would permit us to say that in terms of rarity, and also in terms of quality of material, headdresses denote a higher status than anything else in a clothing system. *Fibulae* and shoulder clasps are second in this categorisation. People of both genders wore them, they were highly visible when worn on the outside of a dress or a cloak, and they could inform viewers about place of origin, status, and perhaps about an extended family. It is possible, though, that only a certain category of these clasps were worn on the outside and that only these were thus seen easily from a distance. Artefacts associated with belts and girdles are the commonest archaeological finds, and Wobst saw them as third, although it is possible that these conveyed even more information, and more often, than the headdress or the shoulder fastenings, about things such as regionality and occupation.

Whenever the hierarchy of shape of garment and belt is used here, it will be with reference to other values as well, the economic and cultural elements mentioned above. It needs also to be recognised that a hierarchy of stylistic messaging is more effective when used specifically, under certain social conditions, e.g. a funeral display, or an elevation to

the throne, or an ordination. We must also, however, question whether an anthropological theory that developed through fieldwork among the living can produce a way to look into solutions concerning the structural axis of early medieval dress, and help us look into at the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon dead.³⁸ The textiles and accessories we have are the ones worn by the dead, who were to be viewed supine and not upright. This changes the angle of what was most prominent. The whole display purpose of social and religious ritual would thus promote another axis of stylistic messaging when it comes to burial costume. And once again, there is one artefact that can be made of woven fibres or leather or metal and leather and that is capable of constricting, adorning or lending to the textile the human shape. It is encountered in an interesting and varied pattern of sex ratios in the realm of the dead, at least, and very widely in our medieval documentation. Indeed, the textile artefact or accessory most often found in excavations is the vestiges of belts: buckles, buckle plates, buckle sets. This record is matched in quantity by descriptions in the written sources.

Wobst would argue that the headdress outranks the lower body ornament as a means of information exchange, the shoulders outrank the waist, and the outer garment the inner garment. According to this system, the twisted and woven gold wires forming *vittae* discussed in Chapter 2 would outrank in importance the metalwork in other rich graves on the sites of the same period in the same locality, e.g. the Loire region in the case of the diadem of Perusson. This can be acceptable only in the sense that the more prominent, costly and visible the element of dress, the more important the status of the person, or the greater the importance and cost of the social ritual of the funerary display for that society. In this context, we might consider the woman buried at Mill Hill, Deal, Kent³⁹ with the remains of gold brocading flaring out around her head and over and around her body as far as the pelvis, suggesting a gold- adorned cloak or a large scarf, as the most prominent element in the grave, visible to all as the ostentatious funerary sign of her wealth and status – of her family or her own, according to the messaging criteria we

³⁸ Or into the dress of their contemporaries, in their everyday occupations, or dressed for special events or distinct occasions in their lives as described in the narratives of the early middle ages. Wobst, *op.cit.*, note 32, in all probability was using New Archaeology concepts borrowed from the field of Prehistoric archaeology to face issues in social anthropology and stylistic analysis and form a non-interdisciplinary model and probably could not and eventually did not use historical sources as well to support his theory.

³⁹ See discussion in Chapter 2, and the comparison with other case studies, pp. 92, 100, see Parfitt, Bruggmann, *op.cit.*, note 100.

set out.⁴⁰ This works only for that specific social function, though, and it will not be generalised here to include the understanding of the dress of the living.

By the same stylistic messaging argument, the fastening, brooches or pins and *fibulae* worn at the shoulders would be more prominent social signifiers than less common items worn at the waist, belts, buckles, and knives, spoons, keys, crystal balls, girdle hangers, if they were meant to be seen. A belt can also be made out from a distance, especially if it is adjoined to a baldric and a weapon, something of crucial if not of vital importance in the early medieval period.

Nevertheless, the most common element in the material evidence, by far, is the element that constitutes the axis of the visual structure: what is worn at the waist. This seems to me to deserve much more stress than Wobst gave it. Either the headdress or the metalwork fastening at the waist could be the marker of élite status, according to the context. It is not easy to prove anything homogeneous on the very atypical basis of what survives, however, whether it is metalwork or the metallic interwoven tabletwork of the braids. These artefacts were important to the ones who could afford them, of course; but what was important for the others, when no fastening elements, no prominent buckles, survive? What was the stylistic criterion for the people who formed - as we shall see shortly - the majority? Was the pattern of the cut, or a particular type of embroidery

⁴⁰ In this way a unique discovery might rank higher by the stylistic messaging system than the graves of e.g. Kentish women with less flamboyant gold fillets which were still accompanied by a number of other status objects such as crystal balls and silver spoons. These last would be deemed important in a different ranking system than the stylistic messaging, the number-of-artefact-types system where the richest graves are the ones with the most variable goods, in a combination to the perceived value and symbolic significance criteria we mentioned above. This evaluation system is used sometimes to organise the data from grave assemblages in the same cemetery, however, it is very difficult to compare items which might have values beyond our contemporary perception, like iron jewellery, or a gilded brooch but more elaborate than the golden ones found at the same site, or wrist clasps that signify ethnic origin or an undertunic, that suggests there were more clothes and so more layering and wealth, or beyond the limits of our knowledge, like a bronze pin that secured a now lost shroud of exceptional quality of weave. Even more important is the case underlined in Owen-Crocker, *op.cit.*, note 36, esp. pp. 20, of artefacts that become more poignant status markers when they are reused as something else: “A metal weaving beater is considered much more prestigious than a pair of tweezers. Although a long, narrow beater was evidently a tool associated with the warp-weighted loom throughout the history of that implement’s use, utilitarian examples were made of wood or bone and the find is a rarity”. Its shape resembles a sword and marks out the woman’s status even more than a man buried with his sword, as it is even rarer. However, Owen-Crocker continues, that if a pair of 8th century tweezers were made of silver and had runic inscriptions on them, these too could be prestigious objects. I think that these criteria are very difficult to use to form a systemic basis of comparison. The last example of the tweezers show that in the end we should use to form criteria of hierarchies of artefact values based not only on the rarity of the item, but also on the most common practices and on the items that yield the most variegated information.

accentuating the axis, as important as the elusive criteria of dyeing⁴¹ and weave pattern which is now lost for most people?

In the written sources, too, it is the things that are worn around the head and – mostly – around the waist that merit a description most often. This reinforces the point that we should look at belts as often as at headdresses if we want to understand visual hierarchy. But whose belts and girdles do we find in the narrative sources, in the legal documents, in the poems? It is not very often that we encounter precise descriptions of people other than royalty, nobility, the clergy, saints, important people in a locality.⁴² Nevertheless among all these magnates of both genders there are also portraits of more ordinary soldiers and their *cingulum* or *balteum*, with sometimes a military and sometimes a honorific and functional value; villains stealing rich belts; and the sick who are healed by contact of a monk's or a female religious's girdle.

We can also ask who inherits these belts or girdles and why, and who is allowed to actually wear them or use them for their value in the surviving wills from Anglo-Saxon England, Merovingian and Carolingian Gaul – and Lombard Italy, which will be used here as an extra comparative element.

We will examine shortly a variety of written sources to examine and test whether indeed the most prominent artefacts in these are the ones that are most visible and the most valuable. Are there any commonly recurrent elements that can give us more information on the way a textile was worn and in a sufficient variety that would embrace all walks of life, occupations and different social functions?

⁴¹ See note 23 about the very rare case when we have documentary evidence on dye-patterning on clothes in late 6th century Francia, as I argue in vol II, Appendix III, p. 139, notes 31, 32 .

⁴² See on *cingulum*, Leyser K., “Early Medieval Canon Law and the Beginnings of Knighthood”, [repr.] in Leyser K., Reuter T., (eds.), *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe, vol. 1: The Carolingian and the Ottonian Centuries*, (London, 1994), pp. 51-71; Nelson J.L., “Ninth-Century Knighthood: The Evidence of Nithard”, [repr.] in Nelson J.L., (ed.), *The Frankish World 750-900*, (London, 1996), pp. 75-87; Nelson J.L., “Monks, Secular men and Masculinity, c.900”, in Hadley D., (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, (London, 1999), pp.121-142; Goldberg E.J., “*Regina nitens sanctissima Hemma*: Queen Emma (827-876), Bishop Witgar of Augsburg, and the Witgar-Belt ”, in Weiller B., MacLean S., (eds.), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800-1500*, (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 57-95.

We also need to explore a way to examine the structural elements of dress and its visual messages. I will add here, in the light of the surviving archaeological evidence, the extant garments that have traces of seams, of separate selvedges at the waist, or loopholes around the waist so that a belt or girdle could be suspended, whether or not the waistline, seen through the cut of patterned, seamed, close fitting or loose garments, comes out as the strongest structural element in male or female dress.⁴³ And we will test that against the descriptions in the written source material.

As we have seen in the previous section, there is material evidence from the long Frankish silk tunic known as the Robe of Chelles, dated to the middle of the 9th century, for several frontal cuts and of triangular additions of fabric at the sides, below the waist, so that the effect is that it can be much wider below the waist. In the long Frankish linen garment known as the Dress of the Virgin, dated probably within a century or more than the previous, there is a less visible accentuation and the form is looser, but still there are structural signs of the construction of the garment such as side gores, amplification of the side seams at the waist and below with a very finely woven thread, of the same type used in the Chelles Robe, as if a belt was used to keep it in place. The Llan-gors textile, dated to the early 10th century, had side gores and loopholes to fasten a belt on. Whether loose or close fitting, the clothing that we have from non-funerary contexts shows emphasis on the waistline, or that a belt was worn.

According to the stylistic messaging system proposed by Wobst, after the headdress, the point of departure for the research of the structural axis in early medieval dress should be the fasteners of a cloak and the outside garment. The fasteners, however, fall clearly into the category of jewellery. Jewellery is an important marker in itself, for both genders, denoting wealth, rank, regionality, perhaps age, personal beliefs, family affiliations. It reveals some information about the form of the tunic, but only in the way this should close at the neck or how this could be hung on the body, clasped at the shoulders as a tubular outer garment known in the bibliography as a *peplos*.⁴⁴ Sometimes

⁴³ As we have seen, there is material evidence from the long silk tunic in the long shirt at Chelles, with several frontal cuts and of triangular additions of fabric at the sides, below the waist so that the effect is that it can be much wider below the waist, see, note 8, Laporte, Boyer, pp. 47-49.

⁴⁴ For illustrations of what a peplos looks like see Owen-Crocker, op. cit., note 6, pp. 44-47, (figs 22, 24-34). For further discussion on this point see Cook A.M., *The Evidence for the Reconstruction of Female Costume in the Early Anglo-Saxon Period in the South of England*, Unpublished MA Thesis (University of

we can tell the difference, from the fastenings at the shoulders (and the wrist-clasps if they exist), between a long-sleeved outer garment in the form of a tunic and a sleeveless *peplos*. All these garments can be found together, however, and the jewellery does not inform us about the shape of either the inner layers of clothing or a cloak, if this was used at all in a burial assemblage. Most of the time, jewellery and fasteners are less informative on the pattern of the cut, the width or the length, of a garment, and it is very seldom that evidence for folds and seams is preserved at the back of them. In addition, fasteners are not only metal: they can be made of fibres of all kinds, or of woven or spun gilt or gold or silver thread, or other organic material like bone or shell, although fasteners of this kind can be very fragmentary and overlooked on site or lost, and may thus not be included in the material record. It seems that jewellery is a messaging system distinct from clothing, but not informative about the shape of dress, and I will not consider it here in this discussion of the structure of dress system.

It is very rarely that we have information about a cloak, or can distinguish between the layers of clothing. It is also very difficult to tell from the fastening elements if these were visible from a distance or not, or if these were covered by another garment and then not used in a stylistic information exchange at all. Evidence for cloaks is very rare, and when we have the metalwork elements used to clasp a cloak in all probability, we are usually given very little information about the rest of the clothing system; because of its rarity, this does not help towards the formation of comparative studies. The cloak, even if it existed, would tell us very little about the shape of the garments near to the body, or the place of dress elements in a system and how these textile and metalwork elements were articulated if we ignored the axis of organisation of these elements on the body. Wobst's hierarchy also does not consider the importance of the visual effect of clothing indoors and at close range when cloaks are taken off.

By contrast, we know much more about the archaeology of belts. Apart from the metalwork fastenings, which give us an idea of the structural axis of the waistline, belts

Birmingham), 1974, especially pp. 61-62 and also in Walton-Rogers, op. cit., note 6, pp. 144-156 for illustrations from Late Antiquity and reconstructions based on specific burial evidence, and the discussion on the paired shoulder brooches and the *peplos*. For the many possible uses of the Kentish brooches, the frontal fastenings to secure the veil, about the varieties of costume in Kent and also the special uses of the small brooches as fastenings of the open outer gown in the Frankish fashion, see in Owen-Crocker, op. cit., note 6, esp. pp. 96-99; See figs 3.19, 3.20, 3.21.

and girdles survive in the material record in a multitude of forms: some are made of fabric, as in the case of the surviving late 5th-century dark woollen belt with an iron ring from the short hooded tunic of a man buried in Marseille in the Abbaye St-Victor;⁴⁵ others are made of tabletwoven braids, as is the case for one of the surviving fragments of the embroidered belt from a late Saxon royal workshop of the middle of the 10th century included in the St Cuthbert embroideries,⁴⁶ and as is certainly the case for the tabletwoven girdle from Bertille's relics at Chelles.⁴⁷ Usually belts are made of leather for both sexes, or of woven string, or else they are tabletwoven. The belt is held in place by four small brooches in front of a garment in the cases of the Anglo-Saxon site of Cleatham (Humberside) in the early 7th century,⁴⁸ and also in Frénouville (Calvados)⁴⁹ and in Vron (Somme)⁵⁰ in the late 6th- beginning of the 7th century. This practice is only attested in these sites, however, and it cannot have been universal: loopholes for belts, girdles and the sashes worn by the middle of the 7th century and onwards must have been much more usual, and these were made of fabric in the case of the burial of the man in Marseille, the Llan-gors tunic and others.

Both the surviving belts and girdles and their remnants, plaque-buckles and back plates of an amazing variety, can give us good information about both the dead and the living of a variety of ranks and walks of life. Their abundance in the material record as the most recurrent surviving find of a burial attests to the importance of this element as one of the most dominant in everyday dress and fashions. Because of this, closed grave assemblages are still dated today by the dating system of types of buckle seriality. It is not, however, that we have to argue for the importance of belts only on the basis of the fact that metallic objects survive even acid soil. This emphasis on the waistline can be supported, as we saw previously, from the garments when they survive, and the belts and

⁴⁵ Boyer R., Benoit F. *et alii*, *Vie et mort à Marseille à la fin de l'Antiquité*, (Marseilles, 1987), esp. in the case of the furnished inhumation in the sarcophagus n° V in the Chapel Saint-André, in Abbaye Saint-Victor, pp. 27-44.

⁴⁶ Coatsworth E., "The embroideries from the tomb of St Cuthbert", in Higham N.J., Hill D., *Edward the Elder 899-924*, (London, 2001), pp. 292-306.

⁴⁷ See note 8, Laporte, Boyer, p. 28. One of them was made with 50 tablets, one of the most elaborate specimens found, comparable to St Cuthbert's soumak weave in the degree of technical sophistication.

⁴⁸ Coatsworth E., Fitzgerald M., Leahy K., Owen-Crocker G., "Anglo-Saxon Textiles from Cleatham, Humberside," *Textile History* 27 (1) (1996), pp. 5-41.

⁴⁹ Pilet C., Lemièrre J., Buchet L., *La Nécropole de Frénouville (Calvados)*, (Rouen, 1975), p. 13.

⁵⁰ Seiller C.L., Gosselin J.Y., Piton D., "Caractères généraux de la nécropole de Vron (Somme)," *Septentrion* 3 (1973), pp. 66-70, see burials 99, 121 A, 43/ 32 A.

girdles themselves, even if we only rely on the archaeological record. Other types of belt, such as composite artefacts of leather and a tabletwoven braid, or chain-girdles with multiple chains and hangings extending down to the knees of some individuals, can add much to our knowledge of the visual effect of the dress in itself and its function and meaning both to the individual and the community.⁵¹ An important element also seems from a period onwards, around the beginning of the 8th century and during the Carolingian period to be the strap end or ends of the belt or girdle, for men and women of the élites and some belonging to the privileged groups.⁵² In the multitude of the forms a belt can take, we can gain more accurate datings of assemblages, and a possible view into fashion. We can also add the case of the metal buckles, usually inscribed or nielloed, which serve a special function, for example as the reliquary or container of an apotropaic piece of fabric, perhaps used as a phylactery, as in the case of a number of large buckles from the extant “Burgundian” row grave sites in La Balme (La-Roche-sur-Foron), or Faverges,⁵³ made especially for funerary use.

All this wealth of information on the material culture complements the historical sources, the lexicographical material pertaining to belting and the different terms deployed by authors for belts, girdles, especially *balteum*, *cingulum*, *strophium* and *zona*. The religious significance of girding is revealed in hagiography where belts feature most as the symbol of spiritual and political investiture of power within the Church, as the medium of deliverance and connection with the supernatural in the realm of sanctity in this world and in the hereafter. The *Life of St Melania*, from the 5th century, is the first of

⁵¹ Cf Appendix II, Chatelaines at the Austrasian-Rhineland sites, esp. Bettborn, Toul, Dieue-sur-Meuse, Neuville-sur-Escaut, Lavoye, Chaouilley, Audun-le-Tiche, Varangéville, Bouzonville, Walsheim, Villey-Saint-Etienne.

⁵² Cf the belt of the warrior at Walda and its important metal strap-reliquary, see Stein, op.cit., note 34, see section 3.10, pp. 303-305, Dannheimer, op.cit., Chapter 1, note 7. Also see the now-lost strap-ends containing relics of the Witgar Belt, the red and white silk girdle given and probably made in the workshop of Queen Emma, (827-876) wife of Louis the German, see note 42, Goldberg, op.cit., pp. 57-95.

⁵³ Colardelle M., *Sépulture et Traditions Funéraires du Ve au XIIIe siècle ap.J.-C. dans les campagnes des Alpes Françaises du Nord*, (Grenoble, 1983), pp. 27-54 for La Balme, (probably a female monastery was situated there, mentioned in *Vita Patrum Jurensium, Romani, Lupicini, Eugendi*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 3, 9, 157, c. 19-20. Also see ibidem, Faverges (Haute Savoie), pp. 87-108. Compare with a number of examples of inscribed reliquary buckles enclosing linen or even cotton fabric from 6th-early 7th century central Burgundy and their analysis and attempts at interpretation in Treffort C., “Vertus prophylactiques et sens eschatologique d’un dépôt funéraire du Haut Moyen Âge: Les Plaques Boucles rectangulaires Burgondes à inscription,” *Archéologie médiévale* 32 (2002), pp. 31-55, see figs 22, 23, 24.

the *vitae* to use the girdle of the Saint for a miracle.⁵⁴ The belt features later, equally markedly, in a hagiography of the 10th century of quite a different style, Odo of Cluny's *Life of St Gerald of Aurillac*.⁵⁵

In numerous descriptions of Barbaric Otherness as in Agathias⁵⁶ or Sidonius Apollinaris,⁵⁷ or in the retrospective description of the dress of Longobards of the past centuries and its comparison to the Anglo-Saxons of his day in Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*,⁵⁸ or in the descriptions of the person of Charlemagne by Einhard⁵⁹ and Notker of Saint-Gall,⁶⁰ we can also witness the *cingulum* taking on a number of nuances of social functions derived from the military and later social ritual of the Roman period. Belts, here *baltea*, are also bequeathed in wills of prominent or princely men, such as the duke of Friuli Eberhard⁶¹ or the Ætheling Athelstan,⁶² or members of the local élites of Pisa⁶³ and Ravenna.⁶⁴ The wills offer insights into what constituted heirlooms and why. This issue brings us closer not only to the markers of rank of different social groups, but also to a variety of social identities within the frame of the social roles that can be displayed in the archaeology (although of course, belt buckles in the ground precisely haven't been inherited by anyone). Who are the people who inherit these items and why? Is there any difference in the terms used for an ecclesiastical girdle and the belt of a

⁵⁴ *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, Gorze D. (ed.), (Paris, 1962), § 61, pp. 248-250.

⁵⁵ *De Vita S. Gerdaldi Comiti Aureliacensis, Odonis Abbatis Clunaciensis*, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 132, col. 639-704.

⁵⁶ Agathias in Keydell R., (ed.), *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum Libri Quinque*, (Berlin, 1967), B, 5,1, 15-30, p. 46 about the dress and the weapons of the Franks in the Italian war in 539.

⁵⁷ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae* IV, 20, (*MGH*) *Auct Antiquiss* 8, pp. 70-71 about the striking and colourful aspect of the Frankish chiefs and the prince Sigismar in Lyon in 470 at a wedding procession.

⁵⁸ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, Bethmann L., Waitz G., (eds.), (*MGH*) *Scr rer Lang et Ital Saec VI-IX*, (Hannover, 1878), IV c. 19, pp. 70-155, pp. 124-356; p. 155, c. 22 comparing depictions of Lombards of old to the Anglo-Saxon dress of his times, that is the 8th century of his day.

⁵⁹ Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni imperatoris / The Life of Charlemagne*, Firchow E.S., Zeydel E.H., (ed.-trans.), *Bibliotheca Germanica* 3, (Dudweiler, 1985), pp. 110-111.

⁶⁰ Notkerus Balbulus abbas Sangallensis, *De gesta Caroli Magni Imperatoris, II*, (*MGH*) *SSRG* (new series) 12, (ed.), Haefele, H.F., (Berlin, 1962), 1, 34, pp. 91-92.

⁶¹ The will of Eberhard and Gisella, counts of Friuli, (15 Juin-16 Décembre 867) in De Coussemaker I., (ed.), *Cartulaire de l' Abbaye De Cysoing*, Société de Saint Augustin, (Lille, 1885), pp. 2-5.

⁶² The will of Ætheling Athelstan (a. 1015), in Whitelock D., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, (Cambridge, 1930), n° 20.

⁶³ A list of movables in a charter given to a nun named Ghittia and to her daughters Aliperga and Willerada in Pisa in May 797, in *ChLA*, XXVI, *Italy VIII*, Tjäder J.O., (ed.), (Zurich, 1987), pp. 56-58, n° 808 (May 797).

⁶⁴ From the Municipal Acts in Ravenna, (ms. lat. 4568 A. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) a fragment of a protocol listing movable items to be bequeathed to the heirs of citizen Gratianus acting on behalf of Stefanus on 17 July 564. See Tjäder J.O., *Die Nichtliterarischen Lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445-700*, (Lund, 1954), 19/1, pp. 235-246, 8, Table 43-53.

magistrate? What kind of belts or girdles are appropriate for women? What are the meanings of a girdle? Are girdles appropriate for men too? What are the types of belt/girdle that, according to law, or to the norms assumed by Carolingian formulae, are appropriate to bequeath? Why are some people buried with belts well after the cessation of fully-dressed furnished burials, and what does this reveal about the fashions, society and concepts of the human body of the 8th and the 9th century? Extracting this very basic part of the structure - both semantic and visual - of a garment system stirs up together more information (or, at least, more questions) than we can possibly handle.

B. The lexis of the structural elements

3. 4 A Lexicographical taxonomy of social roles in reference to the functions of the belt in the texts.

The lexicographical material used to describe a belt, a baldric, belt-fittings and girdles or sashes that is found in the written sources from the 6th-10th centuries reflects the uses of Latin of the period in a variety of cultures or rather societies, in which the same words were used only at times to express the same ideas, norms and values.

The signifiers of the objects described in a narrative or encountered in a theological or legal text either refer to objects that correspond indirectly to the notions

inherent and signified in the belt object, that is to their linguistic equivalent, as when they are used metaphorically or metonymically as well as literally, or they correspond directly to the empirical reality, as presumably when belts are listed and numbered in a will. Both will be construed here as meaningful signs, interpreted through cultural codes, that we have reason to believe formed the interpretative procedures of the early medieval social and cultural horizon. The same word, *balteum* or *cingulum*, needs to be decoded from different points of view, because of the multiplicity of codes, contexts and circumstances in the sources. Nevertheless, the search for the lexis of belting has the advantage that it is encountered very often in the texts and also in the same and consistent linguistic form, so from a morphological point of view there are very few deviations.

The advantage in the deployment of a structural element like a belt so often and consistently in the textual record is that it can be conceptualized and decoded as a common feature of most known vestimentary systems described in the written record. The cultural functions of the object can alter or be the same throughout the texts, as we will see. Its central and crucial place in dress, and the conception of the body as expressing social agency, seems however to be consistent across most cultural codes and norms. This is the most important reason for being critical of Wobst's clothing hierarchy. But even more important is that this element can therefore serve as an axis between what we have already discovered about the similarities and differences between early medieval social norms and what we suspect is being communicated at the level of a subtext.

This study also intends to explore the overlapping or the diverging meanings invested in girdles and belts in general within social groups pertaining to the secular, ecclesiastical, and gendered worlds, inside societies which will by no means be represented here as homogeneous totalities. Sometimes these worlds cross over boundaries of word and meaning and, as a result, an effort will be made here to examine systematically these words and their function within the contexts of a garment system in a few cases and to characterize the separate meanings of the words used by the authors of the period. Then the different or overlapping categories of functions and meanings of the words will be grouped in separate categories, as far as is possible.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ I need to remind here that the establishment of cultural categories signified by the words that refer to clothing and the functions of the words in the text is a prerequisite for the further study and interpretation

The words relating to objects that are extracted from a garment system and are of relevance here are as we shall see, near-synonyms, often (even if not always) used interchangeably to denote the manner of belting and to inform us about the objects attached to the belt. These are in the main the words *balteum* (or *balteum*, *baltheus*, *bratheus*, *baltius*), and *cingulum* (or *cingilum*); and secondarily, because they are only seldom encountered in the sources, *zona*, *balteolus*, *cinctus*, *cinctura* or *cinctorium*. Unlike the phrase *cingulum militiae*, which is the standard late Roman phrase for public office and apparently denoted a special belt or girdle,⁶⁶ which also was used metaphorically, the meaning of each one of these words can be a matter of dispute, as in the authors who are using them, such as Gregory of Tours or Isidore of Seville; they do not seem to signify at first glance a specific object but, rather, a broader category.

The paradigm of Gregory of Tours and Isidore of Seville will be used first to denote the differences and the similarities between the most usual terms, *cingulum* and *balteum*. These two authors are using two separate word sets from which may derive the more specific uses of other writers. The separate meanings of these words and also their synonyms and differentiations will be presented here, to demarcate the semantic field of belting on the basis of the evidence found in these authors. Then we will test the reception of these systems of words in a number of later writers, and the differences in their usage in other contexts and other times, to find out if these writers adhered to the definitions given by Gregory or by Isidore, how many of them use Gregory's simpler set and how many Isidore's, whether they generate new oppositions, and which words continued to be used in the same way, as synonyms, literally or metaphorically, and which not.

of objects and of their functional and cultural signification in the different genres of the early medieval period writers, see Chapter 1, section 1.8 Symbolic values, cultural categories etc. pp. 50-54, section 1.7 A question of Genre etc., pp. 47-49.

⁶⁶ For the origins and specific uses of the *cingulum militiae* see Janes D., "The golden clasp of the Late Roman State," *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (2) (1996), pp. 127-153 and for further references of the *cingulum militiae* within the late Roman vestimentary system, used by the functionaries and the higher civil servants to the simple soldier who had the privilege of wearing it, see Delmaire R., "Le vêtement, symbole de richesse et de pouvoir, d'après les textes patristiques et hagiographiques du Bas-Empire", in Chausson F., Inglebert H., (eds.), *Costume et société dans l'Antiquité et le haut Moyen Âge*, (Nanterre, 2003), pp. 85-98 and idem, *Largesses sacrées et res privata*, (Rome, 1989), pp. 332-345 specifically about the *vestis militaris*.

Isidore devotes a section - *de cingulis*- in the *Etymologies*⁶⁷ to set out the main belt words and their derivatives.⁶⁸ This section is articulated in groups according to the place of a belt on the body and the belt's functions. First are presented the derivatives of *cinctus* (*semicinctium*, *cingulum*). *Cinctus* is a belt of the very wide type young men wear when exercising.⁶⁹ The *cinctium* is a less wide type; and the standard-size belt is the *cingulum*. (*Cinctium* and *cingulum* are, however, used as synonyms further on in this text.) Then follow the *balteum*, *zona*, *limus*, *strophium*, words for belts worn around the waist or hips. *Balteum*, which I will discuss in more detail,⁷⁰ is said to be a type of *cingulum* worn by soldiers. Isidore is here using the standard term *cingulum militare* denoting military service and also public office as the synonym for *balteum*. So, *balteum* is inscribed within the general semantic field of *cingula* but it is specifically the soldier's belt. There is another term for the belt of the functionary further on, so the two meanings of military and civil service, invested in the *cingulum militare* or *militiae*, are here differentiated. *Zona* is given as the exact synonym of *cingulum* without any other qualifier. The *limus* is the purple belt (*cinctus*) of the late Roman civilian public servants. *Strophium*, Isidore says, is a golden belt with jewels, of undefined affinity to the other terms. These last two words are never encountered again in later authors. There is a third group comprising of words for belting and belting accessories with little or no linguistic affinity to the previous groups; these are worn on different parts of the body: belt accessories like the *caltulum* (a catch of the *loros*, a sash),⁷¹ *fibula* and *subfibulum* (the metallic fastening elements of a belt in this instance), and the *redimiculum*, which is an elaborate belt or strap worn at the back and front of the body, restricting the sides. This

⁶⁷ Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive originum Libri XX*, (annotated edition Lindsay W. M.), vol. II, Oxford Classical Texts, Lib. XIX, *De Navibus, Aedificiis et Vestibus*. The way Isidore is treating his material and his possible sources are also discussed in the introduction of Fontaine J., *Isidorus de Seville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne Wisigothique*, Études Augustiennes, (Paris, 1951), where some material from the sections xxxi - *de ornamentis capitis feminarum* -and some parts of the xxxiii - *de cingulis* - are also examined because according to the author these are very characteristic of the Isidorian systems.

⁶⁸ Isid. Etym., op.cit., note 67, Lib. XIX, Cap xxxiii, *De cingulis*, 475-478, giving plausible meanings and making his assumptions about their etymology, for the words *cinctus*, *balteus*, *zona*, *strophium*, *limus*, *caltulum*, *fibula*, *remidiculum*, *succinctorium*.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, 475, 2.

⁷⁰ After pp. 171-177.

⁷¹ Here, in its general use, a sash, or a strap, a thong. As a technical term a *loros* is the sash of the emperor in the depictions of the 8th century and afterwards in Byzantine Art, and it probably derives from the *toga palmata*. See, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* s.v.

denotes a new semantic variety, and its synonyms are the *subcintorium* and *bracile*. At the end are the *fascia* (a breast band) and the *fasciola* (bandages), and the *vitta* and *limbus* (bands worn on the head), which belong to other systems and will not concern us here.⁷² The materials these belts are made of, and more gender-specific information, are not mentioned, apart from the *fascia* which implies a woman's bosom; all the rest could be worn mostly by men. The *subcintorium*, *subfibulum*, *fascia*, *fasciola* and *limbus*, as well as the *limus*, *strophium* and *semicinctium*, are never encountered later on. We are left with *cinctus/cinctium*, a wider belt, *cingulum* or *zona*, a standard belt, and *balteum*, a military version of the *cingulum*, as possible guides for future authors; and also *bracile*.⁷³

Gregory uses a simpler set than Isidore, mostly the *cingulum* and *balteum* in descriptions of men who are soldiers or officials, and only once the word *cinctus* in a metaphorical sense. It has been proposed that Gregory of Tours uses the terms *cingulum* and *balteum* and some other words as synonyms, indifferently, to signify sometimes a belt, sometimes a girdle, and sometimes a baldric of a sword that crosses over the chest or the neck or is belted on around the hips.⁷⁴ Before we explore if this is true, we have to make clear what we understand today when we use these words, which are certainly not synonyms.

A belt is different from a girdle in the sense that it is made of strips of leather, mostly, or of fabric covering a core of harder material, e.g. linen or hemp,⁷⁵ and that it is secured with a fastening element, and worn more closely to the body than a girdle. The latter is made mostly of fabric, it can be tablet-woven, and even when it is composite and includes leather parts, it is looser and softer, and possibly wider than a belt. A girdle can

⁷² See Chapter 2, Isid. Etym., op.cit., notes 72, 78.

⁷³ For which see pp. 185-190.

⁷⁴ Salin E., *La Civilisation mérovingienne d'après les sépultures, les textes et la laboratoire.*, vol. IV, *Les Croyances.*, (Paris, 1956), esp. p. 105, see the phylacteries section and also Crowfoot E., Chadwick-Hawkes S., "Early Anglo-Saxon Gold Braids," *Medieval Archaeology* 11 (1967), pp. 42-86, see p. 58. Both authors comment that all the belts in the descriptions of Gregory could in all probability be understood as articles of male attire, used as baldrics as well and they both focus on the metal fittings on these baldrics for their comparisons between types of metalwork.

⁷⁵ An example of a belt like that was found in an early 7th century female grave, Grave 72, at Burwell, Cambridgeshire, where organic remains of leather and textile were preserved on a woman's openwork buckle, in Burwell, see Lethbridge, op.cit., note 33, p. 60.

have fastening elements too, of metal, a ring⁷⁶ or a buckle, but it is more likely to be tied in a knot. Hangers, metal strap-ends and purses can be attached to both belts and girdles, but a sheath for a knife or a heavy reliquary strap-end is more likely to be attached to a belt.⁷⁷ A baldric is made of leather and consists of a number of straps and metallic distributors that connect it to a sword. It can be a neck strap, worn over the shoulders, a hip-strap, attached to or worn over a waist-belt, or a system of thongs clinging to one side connecting the sword to the belt. It is a composite object that can be made of a combination of leather and metalwork with wooden elements and fabric.⁷⁸ It can be worn with or without a leather belt. Both belts and girdles can be worn by both genders, e.g. an abbot like St Romanus or a courtier and artisan like Eligius can wear girdles or sashes, but baldrics are only found in the sources to have been worn by men. In the burial archaeology, as we shall see, there are many instances where women have a small sheath and a knife attached to their belt. The only instances where a woman is buried with a sword is when this is a weaving batten, with only one Anglian exception of a woman with a spear and a shield.⁷⁹

If we look closely at the context in which words meaning “a belt” are used in Gregory, an author who wrote both historiography and saints’ lives and who presents us with a substantial amount of linguistic data because of the bulk of his work and its variety of genres, we can decide more clearly on the meanings. Belt words are used eleven times

⁷⁶ The tablet-woven woolen girdle of the man buried in the late 6th sarcophagus n° V, in Abbaye Saint-Victor, Marseille fastens with a knot around an iron ring, see Boyer, *op.cit.*, note 45 and see fig 3.24.

⁷⁷ Dannheimer H., “Ein spätmerowingischer Eulogienbehälter von Walda,” *Germania* XLIV (1966), pp. 338-354, see fig 3. 25.

⁷⁸ See *infra* notes 84 (Taplow), 85, 86 (Sutton Hoo), 88 (St Denis), 89 (Lavoye), 90 (Famars, Collegno) and discussion in pp. 174-175 for a number of descriptions from the archaeological publications of baldrics in 6th-7th centuries Anglo-Saxon England, Northern Francia and Lombard Italy, see figs 3.26, 3.27abc, 3.28abc.

⁷⁹ For a number of iron weaving swords of Anglo-Saxon type from Herpes, Charente; Holywell Row, Grave 11; Bifrons; Chessell Down, Grave 15; Finglesham, Grave D3, dated between the 6th and the 7th centuries, see Crowfoot E., (Notes) in Chadwick S.E., “The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Finglesham, a reconsideration,” *Medieval Archaeology* 2 (1958), p. 13, fig 7 and pp. 17-37 *passim*; for a different type, See the two weaving swords of Silligny in Burgundy, Collardelle, *op.cit.*, note 53, fig 122 and see fig 3.29ab. There is only one well-documented exception: The burial of a woman YN6 Grave 184 at West Heslerton, see Haughton C., Powlesland D., *West Heslerton, the Anglian Cemetery.*, vol II, *Catalogue of the Anglian Graves and Associated Assemblages*, The Landscape Research Center, (West Heslerton, N. Yorkshire, 1999), *passim*. This is considered as a case of gender cross-dressing on the basis of the inclusion of a spear and a shield within the burial finds of a slightly built woman. The grave gives no further indication of how the woman was dressed, so I accept here the characterisation of this grave as one with atypical characteristics, but by no means as a case of gender cross dressing as it appears in Walton-Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 6, p. 199.

in the *Libri Historiarum*, though only once in the hagiographical corpus. A *balteum* is found eight times and *cingulum* is used in three instances, two of which are derivatives or synonyms and are used in a metaphorical sense.⁸⁰ In more than half the cases the word *balteum* refers to a belt with a baldric or a dependent sheath with a sword or a knife as if these are both parts of one system, as in the phrase “*extracto baltei gladio*”.⁸¹ It is only in one case, however, that the *cingulum*, without other associations or qualifiers, is found together with a weapon;

“*Puer vero, extracto cultro, qui de cingulo dependebat...*”,⁸²

... but the servant, after he extracted his knife, which was hanging from his belt...

In this case, it is found in the instance of a knife hanging from the belt of a slave or dependant, who would not have been entitled to wear a baldric and be equipped with a sword.

Both terms are sometimes used in combination, as if they belong to one compound or system of objects, as in the scene of the final duel between the royal official Claudius and Eberulf, a renegade count, in the basilica of Saint Martin in Tours:

“*At Claudius extractu a balteo gladio, ad eum diriget. Sed et ille prolatum a cingulo ferrum se ad percutiendum, dum temeretur, adeptat.*”⁸³

... So Claudius drew his sword from his baldric and aimed a blow at him (Eberulf).

Although he was gripped so tight, Eberulf drew a dagger from his belt and prepared to strike him back...

Here the system of a belt of office (possibly), the attached baldric, and the sword is described. So, when the terms are used in association with each other, it is likely that the *cingulum* refers to the part around the waist and that the *balteum* is here understood as

⁸⁰ *Cinctus*, the synonym of *cingulum*, for the other instance of metaphorical use in Gregory; see note 96.

⁸¹ “*Sicharius ... et ob hoc Pectavum ad uxorem cernendam profiscitur. Cumque servum, ut exerceret opera comoneret elevatamque virgam ictibus verberaret, ille extracto baltei gladio, dominum sauciare non metuit...*”, “Sicharius... set off first for Poitiers to visit his wife. There he was exhorting one of his slaves to get on with his work, and had just taken hold of a stick and was belabouring him with it, when the slave dragged Sicharius’s sword from his belt and had the effrontery to wound his master with it.”, Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum X Libri*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer.* 1, p. 365, VII.15, Thorpe L., (trans.), *Gregory of Tours the History of the Franks*, (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 429.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 494, X. 10.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 348, VII.15.

a second strap or a baldric worn across the chest, over the neck and the shoulder or perhaps at the hips. In Gregory, more than half of the times that the word *balteum* is used, it is for descriptions of single combat or other military contexts, so most of the times in this author a *balteum* implies a baldric or a baldric in combination to a belt. The way this was worn can only be interpreted when combined with the archaeology, as contemporary depictions are lacking. Examples of the period are found in the Taplow burial mound, with a gold tablet-woven baldric possibly crossing the chest;⁸⁴ in this particular case this was narrower than the belt. A parallel can be found in the Sutton Hoo burial of the ruler of East Anglia, in the first decades of the 7th century, with a basically similar arrangement of the straps as at Taplow, plus an additional strap at the hips.⁸⁵ The belt and the baldric system in the Sutton Hoo burial chamber were found deposited in the third group of objects placed in the coffin of the ruler, and not worn on the body. This belting system was the most elaborate found so far, including a purse, a sword with scabbard, straps, three buckle-sets and adjoining studs and connectors with their tapes and thongs.⁸⁶ Moving into Francia, it seems that a combination of a shoulder strap and also of a separate hip belt often connected the belt system to the wooden scabbard.⁸⁷ It is possible that a shoulder strap, connected to both the waist belt and the pouch, was worn by the individual of Grave 16 from Saint-Denis; here we find a narrow leather belt, and a baldric

⁸⁴ The man had been buried in his clothes and accoutrements, which included gold-covered belt-clasps and a buckle of solid gold. Both waist-belt and baldric were made of a mass of gold foil strip, one worn diagonally across the chest, the other across the waist and these were held in place by two pairs of golden clasps. His clothes were probably decorated with bands of strip as well. The sword was worn at the right side see Burgess B., "Opening of a tumulus at Taplow", *Records of Buckinghamshire* 5 (1878), pp. 331-337 and Baldwin Brown G., *The Arts in Early England*, (London, 1915), III pls I, xxxiv, 1-5 for the oldest but still clear design, see fig 3.26.

⁸⁵ Bruce-Mitford R.L.S., *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, vols I-III, (London, 1975-83), see esp. vol. II, (London, 1978), fig 423 and also Carver M., *Sutton- Hoo. Burial Ground of Kings?* (London, 1998), p. 126, fig 77.

⁸⁶ Both reconstructions of Taplow and Sutton Hoo princely burials mentioned here are based on the first publications of the data *in situ*, in Burgess, op.cit., note 84, and in *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial. A provisional guide*, (London, 1947), pls 8 (b), p. 11, pls 19-22, pp. 51-52. In this publication, the studs, strap-mounds, strap-ends and buckle of a lost baldric which have supported the purse with a gold frame and a lid were found near another set of smaller metal straps, hinges and mounds, the buckle-set of the shoulder strap. Under these there were another buckle set and studs and distributors belonging to a separate waist belt where the sword and its wooden scabbard were suspended. The evidence of this elaborate system comprises 22 gold pieces.

⁸⁷ See note 89, Chenet, *infra* op.cit., note 89, p. 126 for additional information on the organic remains including wood.

which was much wider .⁸⁸ A different arrangement seems to have been the one worn by the chieftain of Lavoye, with a knife and a long dagger⁸⁹ worn on the right, around the waist-belt. This belt was fastened with a decorated buckle and plate; buckles and hinges from a system of suspension of the wooden sheath of the sword was found at the left femur of the chief; we do not know the exact way this was suspended on the waist-belt, if at all, however. The same is true of the grave of the élite warrior at Famars,⁹⁰ which includes scabbard, knife and purse hanging from possibly two different straps around the waist. Both arrangements, with and without baldric, could have been popular. In both cases, however, the metal parts seem to be very important, assuming the role of male jewellery in these sword-belts worn by the élites.

Apart from when used in a compound, the words of belting in Gregory are found within a hoard of words - that is in a cluster of nouns, used in a description to define a system of objects closely related to one another and of functional and syntactical affinity. In the following episode from Gregory of Tours, the fighting men of the élites, the *leudes*, who are the followers of a lesser Frankish King of Cambrai, Ragnachar, are depicted as wearing and accepting bribes and presents from the enemy of their King, Clovis, of gold-adorned belt-straps and baldrics.⁹¹ Here there is emphasis on the metallic elements, the golden fittings adorning the bands around the arms and the (probably leather) belt or baldric.

⁸⁸ Grave 16/1957, first half of 7th century. See Appendix I, Frankish archaeological sources, n° 12, Salin E., "Les tombes gallo- romaines et mérovingiennes de la basilique de Saint-Denis (fouilles de Janvier- Février 1957), " *Mémoires de l' Académie des Inscriptions et Belles- Lettres* XLIV (1958), p. 35ff, esp. p. 43 and 76 f, pls i, xii-xiv.

⁸⁹ Although we do not know the exact way that the two decorated hinges and buckles (that were found on the oxydised metal and wooden scabbard) were attached to the waist-belt, we can call this system a baldric; the pair of leather straps should be narrow if we judge from the size of the two buckles and hinges, see Chenet G., "La tombe 319 du cimetière mérovingien de Lavoye (Meuse) ," *Préhistoire* 4 (1935), pp. 34-118, esp. p. 38-42, 44-51 and figs 2-9. See fig 3.27a.

⁹⁰ Leman P., Beaussart P., "Un riche tombe mérovingienne à Famars," *Archéologia* 81 avril (1975), pp. 34-40. See fig 3.27.b.c. The same arrangement appears to be the norm in the longobardic burial ground at Collegno, graves 49 and 53, Pejrani Baricco L., (ed.), *Presenze Longobarde. Collegno nell' alto medioevo*, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Piemonte, (Città di Collegno, 2004), pp. 88, 96, figs. 71, 82. See fig 3.27abc.

⁹¹ Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum X Libri*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer.* 1, p. 429, II. 92, 5, (transl.), Thorpe, op.cit., note 81, p. 157).

“Pro qua re Franci maxima indignatione tumebant. Unde factum est, ut datis aureis sive armellis vel baltheis, Chlodovechus, sed totum adsimilatum auro erat enim aereum de auratum sub dolo factum – haec dedit leudibus eius, ut super eum invitaretur”⁹²

...This situation roused the Franks to their outmost fury. Clovis gave golden arm-bands and sword belts to his leudes [the followers of Ragnachar] to encourage them to call him in against their leader. These looked like gold, but they were really made of bronze falsely gilded...

Sometimes the verb accompanying the noun is related to the *cingulum*, as in the story of Mummolus:

“Nunc autem depone balteum meum aureum quod cingeris.”⁹³

...Take off my golden baldric, which you have around you...

which reveals that the *balteum* could well be worn around one's middle, that is the waist or the hips, and not necessarily across the body and around the neck.

This accords with the variety of the archaeological evidence of belts and baldrics presented above. We can compare the use of the same verb in Gregory's hagiographical texts, in the only case we encounter girding in a non metaphorical sense,⁹⁴ when the word *cingulum* or its derivative is used: in the *Liber in gloria martyrum* there is the case of a representation of a crucifix in Narbonne, where Christ is dressed only with a belt or a girdle;

“...(pictura) Dominum nostrum quasi praecinctum lenteo indicat crucifixum...”⁹⁵

... (a picture)of Our Lord on the Cross, wearing something like a piece of cloth...

Here the verb used is a derivative of *cingulum*, although the meaning refers to a loincloth.

The word *cinctura* is found only once, but in the context of a metaphor: the *cinctura* here is metonymically the waist of the king Theudebald, who is paralysed waist-

⁹² Ibidem.

⁹³ Ibidem, p. 361, I, VII.1, (transl. Thorpe, op.cit., note 81, pp. 422-423).

⁹⁴ The other cases in the non hagiographical work of Gregory, have been discussed previously, see notes 91, 93 and another is found in the episode where Eberulf is killed, ibidem, p. 348, 15, VII. The metaphorical use is found in the description of the illness of the king, a stroke waist down and this was foretold by portents in the sky, see note 96.

⁹⁵ Idem, *Liber in gloria martyrum*, (MGH) *Scr. rer. Mer.* 12, p. 52, 22, “Est et apud Narbonensem urbem in ecclesia seniore, quae beati Genesii martyris plaudit, picture, quae Dominum nostrum quasi praecinctum lenteo indicat crucifixum...” ...Near the city of Narbonne in an important church, dedicated in the name of Genesius the martyr, there was a picture of our Lord on the Cross wearing a piece of cloth..., (trans.), Van Dam, R., *The Glory of the Martyrs*, (Liverpool, 1988), p. 40.

down after a stroke and then dies; this is described in the context of a sky portent of a circle around the moon, the sign of rain.⁹⁶

In all these cases it seems that the most generic term is the *cingulum* and the most specific is the *balteum*, although in the contexts of the actions of a military élite the latter is much more prominent in Gregory. Let us go back to the only case where both words are found in juxtaposition, in the scene of the final duel between the official Claudius and Eberulf, the count, who has found sanctuary in the basilica of Saint Martin in Tours.⁹⁷

A man seeking sanctuary was supposed to have disarmed previously,⁹⁸ but this is not the case with Eberulf, who boasted that he could hold to the altarcloth with one hand and kill with the dagger with the other. Further, Eberulf had previously been wearing a *balteum*, because Gregory describes him distributing its golden fittings.⁹⁹ At the moment of the attack, however, he has gone out to dinner with his enemy, and he is drunk and not wearing his sword, because the host, Claudius has been admitted into his trust. So it is most likely that he is wearing a *cingulum*, not a *balteum*, a belt with only a sheath for a dagger for dining.

Gregory is thus consistent in his use of *cingulum* and *balteum*; when the former is used with weapons it is always a knife; swords go with a *balteum*. Whether or not a *balteum* had a neck strap, or other extra element, making it a “baldric”, it was always seen as a more substantial belt, including and meaning most of the time a sword belt.

⁹⁶ The word *cinctura* is found in the description of the paralysis of King Theudebald as presaged by the portents in the sky. The *circulum lunae* is the girdle of the moon, a sign of rain is found in another case, (ibidem, p. 288, V.23, 10). The *cinctura* is used metaphorically as the waist, ibidem, p. 141, 5, IV. 9: “*Tunc, et in circulum lunae quintae stella ex adverso veniens introisse visa est. Credo haec signa mortem ipsius regis adnuntiasset. Ipse vero valde infirmatus, a cinctura deorsum se indecare non poterat*” ...At this time, too, a fifth star, moving in the opposite direction, was seen to enter the circle of the moon. It is my belief that these portents presaged the kings (Theudebald’s) death. He had a stroke and could not move from the waist downwards... Thorpe L., (trans.), op.cit., note 81, p. 288.

⁹⁷ See p. 174, note 83 in idem, *Historiarum X Libri, (MGH) Scr rer Mer. I*, p. 348, VII. 15.

⁹⁸ This, at least in theory. In the other cases of sanctuary mentioned in the *Historia Francorum* (The episodes of Firminus and Caesaria, in IV. 13, Ursus, in IV. 46, Merovech, in V.11-15) the weapons do not seem to have been deposited outside the church. Right of sanctuary for men and women of Frankish or Roman origin alike who were accused for murder, theft and adultery, and also for fugitive slaves, was granted from King Clovis 1st to the Church in the 1st Council of Orléans (511) if the alleged culprit took refuge in a church, its dependencies or the house of the bishop. It was confirmed in all the Gallic Councils of the 6th and 7th century. See *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens: VI-VII siècles.*, De Clercq C., (ed.), t.1- t.2, *Sources Chrétiennes* 353, 354, (Paris, 1989), passim. The actual disarming of the culprit is not mentioned in the relevant chapter of the decrees.

⁹⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum X Libri, (MGH) Scr rer Mer I*, p. 343, 5, lib.VII., “*partem auream baltei sui*”.

Cingulum is used as a semantically wider category of a belt, worn with a knife also, but is never found as a baldric; it denotes other types of girding, and its synonym *cinctura* is used as a metaphor. We should note that, in the context of Gregory's works and in his system, we never encounter the belt of a woman or of a cleric.

Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies* uses these two terms twice, first in association with *fibulae*, in the section *De ornamentis capitis feminarum*,¹⁰⁰ and then, as we have seen, in a long list of the compilation of all that he knows about belts in the chapter *De cingulis*.¹⁰¹ In the first case, he tells us that *fibulae* are brooches used by women on the chest, and that they fasten or stabilise the cloaks of men at the shoulders - the usual place for a male *fibula* - or else their belt (*cingulum*) at the waist. These objects are elements both of dress and jewellery, and they serve for fastening and securing. Isidore obviously refers to the metallic part of a belt, the buckle, and is using the word meaning "brooch" because both probably have the same function, to fasten. No matter what his contemporaries would have called the metallic set of a buckle and the counter-buckle¹⁰² and the back plate (though it is possible that they used *fibula baltei* or *fibula cinguli* for "belt-buckle", because a *fibula* is an inclusive Latin term for any fastening element, and *balteus/cingulum* is where this is localised in a dress system; the phrase is evidenced in texts as we will see shortly), this would suit Isidore's definition of a *fibula*, inscribed within the syntagmatic unit of belt synonyms in *De cingulis*: "*fibula is a Greek word, called φιβλήν by them, that binds together.*"¹⁰³ In all later authors, in the very rare case that they describe both the belt and fastening elements, it is only in the *Life of Gerald of Aurillac* that we find a system of belting that combines both a baldric (*balteum*) and a belt (*cinctorium*) and a fastening element termed "*fibula*" that surely bound one of

¹⁰⁰ Isid. Etym. Liber XIX, Cap. xxxi, *De ornamentis capitis feminarum*., 7, 31, 17: "*Fibulae sunt quibus pectus feminarum ornatur, vel, pallium tenetur a viris in humeris, seu cingulum in lumbis*".

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, Lib. XIX, Cap xxxiii, *De cingulis*, 475-478, 7 giving plausible meanings and making his assumptions about their etymology, for the words *cinctus*, *balteus*, *zona*, *strophium*, *limus*, *caltulum*, *fibula*, *remidiculum*, *succinctorium* as we saw earlier in this section.

¹⁰² Probably the *subfibula* in *De cingulis* could be the counter-plate or the catch-plate for the pin in a brooch according to Isidorus's description: "*subfibulum, subligaculum*": "...it goes under the *fibula* and binds it together..." , ibid, see note 101, *De cingulis*, 475-478 , 7, 15.

¹⁰³ Isid. Etym., Lib. XIX, Cap xxxiii, *De cingulis*, 475, 7, 15 : "*Fibula Graecum est, quam illi φιβλήν dicunt, quod ligat.*".

them or both together;¹⁰⁴ so we cannot tell if a *fibula* was generally thought to be restricted to the *balteum* or the *cingulum/cinctorium* type of belt. What we do know from the later authors' hoards of words is that a *zona* is never found in the same hoard with a *fibula*. This may be further evidence that the type of girdle called *zona* (see below pp. 182-184) could mostly be tied in a knot.

There is complementary evidence for this, in a Pisa document of 797¹⁰⁵ which lists movables given to a nun and to her daughters. Among other pieces of jewellery, *solidi* and *tremisses*, there is : "...*unu baltio cum banda et fibula de argento inaurato*,..." as one compound system of objects in close proximity and association. This is the most immediate testimony to how Italians in the late 8th century, in colloquial spoken Latin, used in the testimony of a private document and not in the compilation of terms or the imaginary objects of a more literary writer, named their belts. Here, *baltio* is the belt - possibly for a man - and *fibula* is the buckle. *Banda* may be a leather strip of a baldric, or a back-plate, although by this period the plaque-buckle sets of three pieces had been out of fashion for more than 60 years¹⁰⁶ (unless we are dealing here with an heirloom), so the latter may be less likely.

¹⁰⁴ *De Vita S. Geraldii Comiti Aureliacensis, Odonis Abbatis Clunaciensis*, Migne P., (ed.), *PL* 132, p. 656 : "*Quid dicam de balteo vel ambitiosis cinctoriis aut fibula, de equorum phaleris...*", see the relevant passage translated in Chapter 1, note 6, p. 18. By contrast in the very other cases we have hoards of words describing clothes, belts and fastening elements that cannot be associated to a belt but they mostly refer to a number of brooches - *fibulae*- perhaps including all the buckles of the system like in the *life of St Radegunde* (see Chapter 2, op.cit., note 43, translation in text, p. 75) while in the *life of Eligius*, see op.cit., note 116 for the text and translation of two relevant passages, there is no mention of any fastening element of his *zona* in this or other descriptions of his clothes.

¹⁰⁵ "...*et uno solido Beneventano, duo anula aurie (:) uno pari[o...], [un]o patio de auro, unu baltio cum banda et fibula de argento inaurato, et braci[le....]*..." (ChLA XXVI, Italy VIII, Tjader J.O., (ed.), (Zurich, 1987), pp. 56-58, n° 808 (May 797).

Also in a fragment of a protocol listing movable items to be bequeathed to the heirs of citizen Gratianus acting on behalf of Stefanus on 17 July 564 in Tjäder J.O., *Die Nichtliterarischen Lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445-700*, (Lund, 1954), 19 /1, pp. 235-246, 8, Table 43-53: "*Item et in speciebus secundum divisionem argenti libras duas, hoc est cocliares numero septem, scotella una, fibula de bracele et de usubandilos, formulas duo/decim, stragula polimita duo valentes...*". (*usubandilos* is glossed as equivalent of the bands to tie the leggings, as the *hosebendas* in Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, (MGH) *Scr rer Langob* 4, Bethmann L., Waitz G., (eds.), 124, 11; and in Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* 58, (MGH) *Auct Antiquiss* 15, p.480, 1-2, see Chapter 2, op.cit., note 249.

¹⁰⁶ There is an earlier reference to a *banda* in *Liber Pontificalis, Gregorius II*, tom. I, c. 19, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, Duchesne L., (ed.), [2nd edition] (Paris, 1955), p. 6. It also is a synonym of *signa* i.e. standards, banners see Niermeyer-Kleff-Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* s.v. The material record points to an introduction of plaque-buckle sets of three pieces around the end of the 5th century, especially in Northern Gaul and Rhineland and Bavaria in the migration period, see Naumann-Steckner F., "Death on the Rhine: changing burial customs in Cologne, 3rd-7th century", in Webster L., Brown M., (eds.), *The transformation of the Roman World, 400-900.*, (London, 1997), pp. 143-157, esp. pp. 154-157 and also

To return to Isidore: the *balteum* is given a clearly military character and use: it is the soldiers' belt.¹⁰⁷

“.. *Balteum cingulum militare est dictum pro quod ex eo signa dependant ad demonstrandam legionis militaris summam, id est sex milium sescentorum, ex quo numero et ipsi consistunt . Unde et balteus dicitur non tantum quo cingitur, sed etiam a quo arma dependant.*”

.. The belt is called the belt of military duty of a soldier because from this is suspended the sign of the uppermost number of a legion, which is six thousand and six hundred comprising the whole force of the legion. From this, a belt is to be called not only that which girds around the waist, but also that which arms are suspended from.

Here, at first glance, there is an opposition to what we have seen so far in Gregory of Tours; the *cingulum militare/militiae* is used here as the synonym of the *balteum* (*militare*), whereas Gregory does not use *cingulum* as a baldric, for, although it could be worn by fighting men too, it is never found with a sword in Gregory. The difference is not great though, given that Isidore is using the standard term of the belt of office for a *balteum*; this is not any *cingulum* worn by a man of substance and power, who could have a sheath for a knife probably, as in Gregory, but the specific *cingulum militare*, and the context here is the distinctive badges of each legion, which is clearly military. The reason for this opposition is that Isidore's system includes another word that is not available to Gregory's functional and simpler but more inclusive system: the *limus* is the

Kazanski M., Mastikova A., “Les Origines du costume “Princier” féminine des barbares à l' époque des Grandes Migrations”, in Chausson F., Inglebert H., (éds.), *Costume et société dans l' Antiquité et le Haut Moyen Age*, (Nanterre, 2003), pp. 107-120. These became fashionable in the period between the late 6th century to the period around the early 700's and the middle of this century in most of Francia, but they are quite recurrent among the burial finds in Belgium, see Roosens H., “Reflets de Christianisation dans les cimetières mérovingiens,” *Les Études Classiques* 53 (1985), pp. 111-135, as also in North-west Gaul, See Salin E., *La civilisation mérovingienne d' après les Sépultures, les Textes, les Laboratoires*, vol 1. *Les idées et les faits*, (Paris, 1949), passim, for the designs of the three-piece sets. Also these were very prominent in early 7th century Aquitaine and also some Visigothic sites, see James E., “Burial and status in the Early Medieval West,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Ser. 39 (1989), pp. 38-40, and idem, “Les problèmes archéologiques du sud-ouest Wisigothique et France”, in Périn P., (éd.), *Galloromains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine Septimanie et Espagne*, Actes de VII Journées Internationales d'Archéologie mérovingienne, Toulouse 1985, (Rouen, 1991), pp. 149-152, and Lerenter S., “Nouvelle approche typologique des plaques-boucles mérovingiennes en bronze de type Aquitain”, in *ibid*, pp. 225-236.

¹⁰⁷ See Isid. Etym., op.cit., note 103, Lib. XIX, Cap xxxiii, *De cingulis*, 478, 7: for the synonym of *cingulum*: “*Zona Graecum est quam illi ζωνάριον, nos cingulum nuncupamus*”.

belt (*cinctus*) of the civilian official,¹⁰⁸ and *cinctus*, *cingulum* as also *cinctorium* and *zona* in Isidore are exact synonyms. So in Gregory the semantic range of the *cingulum* includes some military aspects according to its qualifier and to its context, whereas in Isidore this is very clearly differentiated into two distinct terms: there is a *cingulum militare* that is a *balteum* and there are other *cingula* such as the *limus* worn by civil servants, the *zona* etc. that are worn by everybody else. In addition to that, it is a topos in later saints' lives for authors to use the phrase *balteum milicie*¹⁰⁹ but at other times the *cingulum milicie* or *militiae*¹¹⁰ to denote the turning of one's life from that of an élite layman, usually a soldier, to the life of an ecclesiastic, without any difference in meaning. It seems at first that the focus here is not on a specific type of belt, but on a metaphor for a way of life, the secular life of a soldier or a civilian, and that the authors use it interchangeably, so that either *cingulum* or *balteum milicie* would be equally appropriate. But in the context of the saints' lives these belts are often taken off and placed ritually on the altar; they belong to soldiers and counts;¹¹¹ and these terms both appear in Frankish laws:¹¹² if a monk runs away and enlisted, his soldier's belt and his honour would be taken away from him, in a very tangible demonstration of public disgrace.¹¹³ The term here referred to a real object that was clearly as identifiable and distinct as a soldier's belt, the *cingulum* / *balteum milicie*. In this case, these authors were using the simpler but more inclusive system of Gregory, where more meanings converged into *cingulum*.

In Isidore's *Etymologies*, the exact synonym of *cingulum* is given as *zona* (ζώνη = a sash, a belt): "... *Zona Graecum est, quam ζωνάριον, nos cingulum nuncupamus.*"¹¹⁴ - although the words used in the *Life of Saint Melania the younger*, in the Greek version of

¹⁰⁸ See Delmaire, op.cit., note 66, Janes, op. cit., note 66, and see Harlow, Chapter 2, op.cit., note 284, pp. 44-69.

¹⁰⁹ Odo Abbas Glannafoliensis, *Vita Mauri*, AASS, Jan 1, 1039-1050, p. 51, cap. VIII for an example used in a text of around the middle of the 9th century.

¹¹⁰ *Vita Landiberti episcopi Traiectensis auctore Nicolao*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 6, 415, 15, circa 730. For the *cingulum militiae* as the standard late Roman phrase for public office, see above notes 108, 66.

¹¹¹ See Leyser K., "Early Medieval Canon Law and the Beginnings of Knighthood", [repr.] in Leyser K., Reuter T., (eds.), *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe, vol. 1: The Carolingian and the Ottonian Centuries*, (London, 1994), pp. 51-71.

¹¹² The texts of the Laws show usually evidence for *cingulum* not *balteum*, see below, notes 137, 138.

¹¹³ See notes 137, 138.

¹¹⁴ Isid. Etym., Lib.XIX, Cap xxxiii, *De cingulis*, 478, "Zona is the Greek word, that is ζωνάριον for what we call the belt".

the early 5th century, are interchangeably ζώνη (= belt, sash) and λουρίον (leather belt, strap).¹¹⁵ No matter what Isidore understood as *zona*, it could elsewhere be a generic term having no military or gender specific connotations, covering both categories of objects, a strap and a girdle; so *cingulum* and *zona* can both correspond to a belt, made of leather or a woven textile. In some hagiographical examples, as in the *Life of Eligius*,¹¹⁶ the *zona* is found covered with gems and possibly golden embroidery or tablet-weaving or, less plausibly, metal fittings. One purse, at least, could be hung from it. In the same text it appears again as a synonym of a *cingulum* twice:

“habebat quoque zonas ex auro et gemmis compositas necnon et bursas eliganter gemmatas..”

.. having belts composed of gold and gems and elegantly jewelled purses..

“..cuncta praeter corpus proprium quae habere poterat usquead cingulum et amphibalum necnon et victum necessarium”

...all that he wore even next to his skin from his belt and cloak to his necessary everyday food..

“Nonnumquam vero cum videret eum rex ob devotionem amoremque Christi expoliatum, subripiens sibi ipsi dabat ei proprium et indumentum et cingulum.”

¹¹⁵ *Vie de Sainte Melanie*, Gorze D., (ed. and trans.), (Paris, 1962), p. 248, § 61 (trans. based on the French text by Gorze and the Greek text) : “Ἡ δὲ ἐστῶσα ἐπὶ πολὺ τὸν Θεόν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς ἔκτενῶς ἰκέτευσεν, καὶ λύσασα τὸ λουρίον ὃ ἦν διεζωσμένη, ἐπέθηκεν αὐτὴ λέγουσα...”...And she stood up for a long time and prayed to God in length for the woman and having unfastened her belt she engirdled it around her, saying...

¹¹⁶ *Vitae Eligii Episcopi Noviomagensis Liber I, (MGH), Scr rer Mer. 4*, p. 678, c.12, (trans. based on Mc Namara J.A., (trans.), “Dado of Rouen, Life of St Eligius of Noyon” in *Medieval Hagiography: an Anthology*, Head T., (ed.), (London, 2001), p. 145: *“Utebatur quidem in primordio aurum et gemmas in habitu; habebat quoque zonas ex auro et gemmis compositas necnon et bursas eliganter gemmatas; lineas vero metallo rutilas orasque sarcarum auro opertas, cuncta quidem vestimenta praetiosissima, nonnulla etiam olosirica.”*...At first, he was used to wear gold and gems on his clothes having belts composed of gold and gems and elegantly jewelled purses, linens covered with red metal and golden sacs hemmed with gold and all of the most precious fabrics including all pure silken ones. ..The belt and purse are of central importance in the entire clothing system, see also ibidem, 677, 10, when Eligius gives away his belt and cape to buy out the freedom of captives, and the word is again *cingulum* : *“cuncta praeter corpus proprium quae habere poterat usquead cingulum et amphibalum necnon et victum necessarium.”*; also 679, 93 *“Videres plerumque ire funiculo cinctum, vilibus vestibus tectum que videbas dudum radientia auri et gemmarum mole opertum. Nonnumquam vero cum videret eum rex ob devotionem amoremque Christi expoliatum, subripiens sibi ipsi dabat ei proprium et indumentum et cingulum.”* ...Then you would see him, whom you had once seen gleaming with the weight of the gold and gems that covered him, go covered in the vilest clothing, with a rope for a belt. Sometimes the King himself would see him despoiled for love and devotion to Christ, tearing from himself what he had given him even to his own clothing and belt... It is stated here that Eligius was given by the King the two basic parts of dress, as phrased in these terms: all clothing and a belt: *“et indumentum et cingulum”*.

...Sometimes the king himself would see him despoiled for love and devotion to Christ, snatching off his own from what he had given him even to his clothing and belt...

We should take into consideration that this is the case of an élite artisan, and that throughout his *Life* there are no military ideals or overtones expressed, so *balteum* has no place here. So a *zona* or a *cingulum* so far seems to be the non-military layman's belt, a notion nuanced only in Gregory, who once describes a fighting man wearing it, but even then not as a baldric. In this there is no opposition to the system of Isidore. Still in the 9th century *Life of Landbert of Fontanelle*,¹¹⁷ the saint before his conversion owns both *baltea* and *zonas et armillis*, that is arm bands, so we can assume first that *zona* could be used interchangeably with a *cingulum* as in Isidore and the *Life of Eligius*, and also that it could be owned by someone with military aspirations. In this case the *zona* is quite possibly used in a sense found in Isidore's system which coincides with all aspects of the *cingulum* in Gregory. In the saint's life a *zona* or a *cingulum* was the belt of the civilian clothing of the saint before his conversion, while the *balteum* was probably worn when he wanted to wear his sword, or when he was fully armed.

In Isidore's *Etymologies* and in a very few later sources,¹¹⁸ a *strophium* is a golden belt with gems,¹¹⁹ but it is very rare and never found in this sense in the classical

¹¹⁷ *Vita Lantiberti Abbatis Fontanellensis et episcopi Lugdunensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 608, 20 : "Qui in die suorum praecissionis capillorum inter alia diversarum specierum munuscula septuaginta auri solido predicto magno patris contulit, quod in ornamentis suis fabrifactorio opere insitum erat, in baltheo, videlicet, zonis, atque armillis".

¹¹⁸ As in a poem of Theodulf of Orléans on Ruadhaid, Hiltrud, Theodrada and the rest of the female entourage of Charlemagne: "Ista nitet gemmis, auro illa splendet et ostro, Haec gemma viridi praenitet, illa rubra. Fibula componit hanc, illam limbus adornat, Armillae hanc ornant, hancque monile decet. Huic ferruginea est, apta huic quoque lutea vestis, lacteolum strophium haec vehit, illa rubrum."

...The one is agleam with gems, the other shines with gold and purple, the one is resplendent with sapphires, the other with rubies. One has her appearance set off by a brooch, the other by a girdle, one wears a fine armband, the other a becoming necklace. A dark-red dress suits one, a dress of saffron yellow the other, one wears a snow-white bodice, another a bodice of red...Theodulf Aurelianensis, *Carmina*, Dümmmler E., (ed.), (MGH) *Poet Lat* I, 445. (trans. based on "On the court", in Godman P., (ed. and trans.), *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, (London, 1985), n° 14). The classical use of *strophium* is mainly a golden brow circlet, see the next note 119.

¹¹⁹ See Isid. Etym. *De cingulis*, 478. The sources are mentioned here as well: "Strophium est cingulum aureum, de quo ait Cinno et Prudentius."...Strophium is a golden belt, of which speak Cinno and Prudentius... (Catull. 64.65, see below, here I keep Isidore's spelling), and Prudentius (περί Στεφάνου. 25.4). Actually it is used as a *vitta*, or a head-band in Pliny, in *De Naturalis Historia*. 21. 3 and in Prudentius. *Cathemerina*. 3.26 where it is worn by priests as a chaplet. (Oxford Latin Dictionary s.v.). Also in Plautus. *Aulularia*. tr. I, and in Cicero. *Oratio. Harusp. Resp.* 21.44 and also in Catullus. *Per. Ven.* 64. 65, (correct spelling) as a breast-band worn by women crossing their chest under the breasts ("ἀνάλαβος"). It can mean a rope or a twisted cord in Apuleius. *Met.* 11.16 and in Vitruvius. *De*

Latin authors. *Strophium* is the last entry in the Isidorian system pertaining to belts worn around the waist or hips.

We have discussed the other words in this group, and we have shown which are found as synonyms in both systems, of Gregory and of Isidore (*cinctus*, *cinctorium*, *zona*, *cingulum*) for a belt in its general sense, non-military, and which are found used in a similar sense (*balteum* in both authors or *cingulum militare* in Isidore) or else with a slightly different sense (the *cingulum* in Gregory's system, which coincides with both *cingulum* and *limus* in Isidore and some aspects of the *balteum*). We still have one more term and its synonyms, which is encountered only in Isidore, not in Gregory, although it finds more specific uses in later writers: *bracile*.

The *redimiculum* or *subcinctorium* is given by Isidore as the synonym of the *bracile* or *brachile*,¹²⁰ a word recurrent in sources of all kinds,¹²¹ where it more often appears as *bracile*. Isidore says that this is either a harness or a belt-strap that constrains the width of a garment at the waist. It seems to have crossed at the back, around the arms, at the shoulder blades, or it could be crossed over in a x shape in front at times, reminding one of a horse harness. Isidore says at the end of his description that it is worn around the waist, although this is clearly not at all what he has been explaining hitherto. This is because he is trying to trace the etymology of the word *brachile* or *brachiale* and distinguish it at any cost from anything that has to do with the arms (that would make us mistake it for the *armillae*, the arm-bands). Clearly this kind of belt is worn around the body, over the shoulders and restricting the sides.

“Redimiculum est quod subcinctorium sive bracile nuncupamus, quod descendens per cervicem et a lateribus, colli divisum, utrumque alarum sinus ambit atque hinc inde subcingit, ut constringens latitudinem vestiat corpus, contrahat atque coniungendo componat. Hunc vulgo brachilem quasi brachialem, dicunt, quamvis nunc non brachiorum, sed renum sit cingulum.”

Architectura. 10.3.6. Generally, there is not a single reference to a *strophium* having the meaning a belt in the Latin authors of classical and late antiquity. Isidorus in this case must be improvising with an inclusive term. There is only one instance where it is used as main part of clothing and not an accessory, in the above example of Theodulf of Orleans, who uses *strophium* in the context of dresses and tunics, and in all probability neither as a girdle nor a chaplet.

¹²⁰ Isid. Etym., op.cit., note 119, *De cingulis*, 478, 20.

¹²¹ As we shall see shortly, in the vestimentary section of the Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia written in 530, op.cit., Chapter 2, notes 41, 42, for text and translation of the relevant passage. See in the examples from the Hagiography of the 7th and mostly of the 8th and 9th centuries as we shall see shortly, see examples in notes 125, *Vita Germani*, 126, *Vita Eligii* and in an 6th century Will, from Ravenna, see note 105 and below note 124.

..The “redimiculum” is what we call a *subcinctorium* or a *bracile*, which descends down at the back of the neck and the sides, it is divided and distributed equally at the front of the neck, encircles both sides the middle [of the garment] and it is tied from there as a harness, so that it clothes the body by constricting the width [of the cloth], it covers the cloth and restricts it at the same time. That is called in the vulgar tongue a “brachile”, not because it is the strap of the arms, but because it is the belt (*cingulum*) around the waist...

The term appears in the Vulgate (Ecclesiast. 21:24), but there it denotes armbands, as in classical Latin; and in Ambrose.¹²² In Isidore’s *Etymologies* we have the first description of the word, in two different spellings, and we are given its synonyms; but this is not the first time that we encounter a *bracile* that means “a belt”.

Benedict of Nursia, writing a century earlier than Isidore, in central Italy, around 530, included the *bracile* in the *Rule* that regulated the dress of the monks:¹²³

“...dentur ab abbate omnia qui sunt necessaria: id est cuculla, caligae, *bracile*, *cultellus*...”

In a monastic context like that, a *bracile* was probably a simple leather strap to gird up the habit when the monk was performing manual tasks. This could be done either if the strap was worn around the waist or if the habit was strapped over the shoulders. Even if the latter was the particular way for a monk to wear the *bracile*, the term does not mean the elaborate x-girding Isidore describes. The word is found again in everyday life; in a fragment of a will in Ravenna in 564, to qualify a type of buckle as a “*fibula de bracile*”.¹²⁴ So, this object was worn with a buckle, and again the meaning is moving further away from Isidore’s description. In later hagiography the monastic uses of the *bracile* are revealed more explicitly. In the *Life of Germanus of Grandval*, written by Bobolenus around 675, this belt is equated for the first time to a *cingulum*:¹²⁵

¹²² Ambrosius, *Epistulae*, Migne J.P., (ed.), *PL* 16, col. 875B-1286A.

¹²³ Benedictus of Nursia, *Regula monachorum*, op. cit., Chapter 2, note 41, cap. XV, p. 917 for the translation of the whole passage.

¹²⁴ See the use of a *bracile*, nearer Isidorus’s time in the fragment of a protocol listing movable items to be bequeathed to the heirs of citizen Gratianus acting on behalf of Stefanus on 17 July 564 in Tjäder J.O., *Die Nichtliterarischen Lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445-700*, (Lund, 1954), 19 /1, pp. 235-246, 8, Table 43-53: “*Item et in speciebus secundum divisionem argenti libras duas, hoc est cocliare numero septem, scotella una, fibula de bracile et de usubandilos, formulas duo/decim, stragula polimita duo valentes...*”.

¹²⁵ *Vita Germani abbatis Grandivallensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 39, 15.

“Tunc, quidam unus a fratribus ipsa die interfectionis eius inter hostium cuneus cingulum, quod vulgo brabilem vocantur, inter manus trahentium invenisset, monasterii vestiario detulit.”

Here, the term *brabile* means a belt, in general, for the *cingulum* is apparently used as the most inclusive term we have seen already; we recognise here the simpler *cingulum* of Gregory of Tours. The *brabile* is probably not elaborate, it is the strap mentioned in Benedict’s *Rule*, and (the most important point) this is the word used in the “vulgar tongue”, the spoken Latin/ proto-Romance around Basel. The way the *brabile* is worn on a body has changed from Isidore; it is a belt-strap, as possibly it is in the *Rule* of Saint Benedict, but the context here implies more clearly that it is something functional and easy to put on. The form of the belt has also changed: if it looks like a *cingulum* it is definitely worn around the waist with a buckle. The opposition to Isidore’s system becomes clearer.

In the *Life of Eligius*, written first by Audoin of Rouen in 673-75, and then re-worked in the 9th century, “*brabile*” is clustered with other dress items in a description - probably belonging to the older version of the *Vita*:¹²⁶

“*Id etiam et in peregrinos Christi saepissime faciebat. O Quotiens debitor esse voluit, ut debitoribus subveniret? Quotiens brabilem aurem, pungam quoque auro et gemmis comptam sibi subripuit, tantum ut miseris succurreret?*”

...And often it was pilgrims of Christ that he rescued. Oh daily did he not wish to be a debtor that his own debts might be forgiven? Daily did he not rip golden bracelets, jeweled purses, and other gold and gems from himself so that he might succor the miserable?

It is equally possible that the *brabile* in this spelling and in this context refers to an armband, as in the Vulgate and Ambrose tradition, rather than a belt. We have already seen in Gregory that it was a common practice of the *potentes* to distribute both golden belts and armbands.¹²⁷ The golden *brabile* could be a belt too, however, because it is found in the context of a matching set of purse of gold and jewels, something we have

¹²⁶ *Vita Eligii*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer.* 4, 677, 15 (Mc Namara J.A., (trans.), “Dado of Rouen, Life of St Eligius of Noyon” in *Medieval Hagiography: an Anthology*, Head T., (ed.), (London, 2001), p. 144.

¹²⁷ See notes 91, 92, the story of Ragnachar, passage and translation and discussion p. 176.

seen associated with belts in the material record.¹²⁸ The verb that is associated with these objects, though, means to give something away furtively, more likely to be used with smaller objects, which is not of much help. I think that in this case it is less likely that the *brachile* meant an armband, because in the 7th century and later the established word for that is mostly *armilla/armelli*.¹²⁹ In all other descriptions of the clothes of Eligius, anyway, there is no mention of armbands, but of belts (*zonas, cingula*) which are exclusively associated with purses (*pungae* and *bursae*).¹³⁰

If the *brachile* is indeed a belt, it is a synonym of *zona* and *cingulum*, the rich civilian's belt closer to the *cingulum* in the general sense found in Gregory. This is described in the same *Life* as bejewelled and embroidered, a new form of the *bracile*: we saw earlier that Isidore does not inform us on the material of the belts.

I do not exclude the possibility that a *bracile/brachile* could be made of gold. The last time we encounter this term before the 11th century is in Italy in the context of a will, listing (probably male) jewellery. This *bracile* is found in the already mentioned list of movables handed down to the nun Ghittia and to her daughters in Pisa, in 797.¹³¹ Given the context in which it is found, in a hoard of words pertaining to the jewellery worn on a person, and next to another word that also means a belt, in the same text, the *bracile* probably is another variety of a belt, precious enough to be bequeathed, and thus possibly of silver or gold, as all items in the rest of the sentence. We are not given any other details, however, and we do not know the exact form of this object, or how it was worn; though it was probably like any ornamental belt restricting a garment:

“...et uno solido Beneventano, duo anula aurie (:) uno pari[o...], [un]o patio de auro, unu baltio cum banda et fibila de argento inaurato, et braci[le....]...”

The *redimiculum*, the synonym of *bracile* according to Isidore, is found only once again as a sword strap in a slightly changed form of spelling as *reminiculum* in the

¹²⁸ See notes 89, 90, and discussion in pp. 174-176 about the matching decoration of the sets of purse with decorated lid, belt-buckle and plate, and baldric and scabbard of the chiefs in Famars and Lavoye.

¹²⁹ With an exception : the term is “*brachiale*” and not “*brachile*” in an entry in the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, Eckhardt K.A. (ed.), (*MGH*) *Leges* IV, (Hannover, 1962), 1, 27, 10 that refers to armbands. The texts of the titles included have been reworked between the early 7th and the late 8th century and it is not always possible to date the terms used.

¹³⁰ See note 116, *Vita Eligii*: “... *bursas eleganter gemmatas*...”.

¹³¹ It is possible that the *bracile* enumerated in the list of the movables handed down in Pisa, in 797 is an ornamental belt of this type, see will of Pisa (797), *ChLA* XXVI, *Italy* VIII, Tjader, op.cit., note 105.

first quarter of the 10th century *Life of Gerald of Aurillac*. The context is clearly military and equestrian and it should be read as the sword-strap, sword-belt or the scabbard-strap, as there are already two words in the same sentence referring to the clearly military belt and a baldric:¹³²

...He always wore woollen or linen clothes of the old fashion, and not in that which the sons of Belial, who are without restraint, have devised and follow in our day. His were so made that they neither suggested pompous affectation, nor drew attention by plebeian rusticity. He took care not to adorn himself more than usual with silken or precious garments either because of the occurrence of any feast or the presence of any dignitary, and he would not change or renew his sword-belt for twenty years if it would last so long. What shall I say of the belts, the twisted cinctures, the buckles, the decorated medallions for horses, when he not only forbade himself to wear gold, but even to possess it?

All the items of belting are used here in combination and in reference to a sword, although we are given no further information about the clothes or the armour they kept in place. All the same, this is clearly a non-decorative set of male accessories, unlike the *bracile* in the Pisan will or the *Life of Eligius* we examined. The objects in the Pisa document may well have been worn all together in a display of a combination of male jewellery items. The fact that these can be passed down to a nun's daughters, to own if not to wear them, does not change their function if they are of a form that are easily recognizable as usually worn by men. But if the *reminiculum* in the *Life of Gerald* is the synonym of the *bracile*, the functional, belt-strap of the monk, then there is a continuation in the use of this term in its simpler sense, as found in the first time this was used by St Benedict, but now used for soldiers as well, taking us much further from both the form and the function of *bracile* in Isidore's system.

¹³² *De Vita S. Gerdaldi*, op.cit., note 104. The translation is by Sitwell G., ed. and trans.), *The Life of St. Odo by John of Salerno and the Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac by St. Odo* (London, 1958), pp. 110-111: “*Porro vestibus laneis, aut lineis, non isto modo quo nunc a filiis Belial praesumptum et excogitatum est, qui utique sine iugo sunt, sed antiquo more semper usus est, ita dumtaxat contextis, ut nec affectata pompa redoleret, nec plebeia rusticitate notarentur. Sericinis vero vel pretiosis, nec obtentu quidem cujuslibet festivitatis, nec alicujus praesentia marchionis, plus solito se comere studuit. Reminiculum illud quo solet ensis renibus astringi, per viginti annos, si tandiu durare posset, non mutare aut renovare curabat. Qui dicam de balteo vel ambitiosis cinctoriis, aut fibula, de equorum phaleris, quandoquidem ille non solum portare aurum, sed nec habere quidem pateretur?*”.

There seems to have been two different meanings for the word *bracile* in the 6th century. If we set aside the possibility that *brachile* was often - even according to Isidore - confused with the *brachiale*, the armband, the *Rule* of St Benedict denoted a strap-belt by this term. The second meaning, used by Isidore, is that of a form of belting crossing the back. No author uses the term for a woman's belt but in the Pisa will this item can be given to a woman to possess. Benedict's term is popularised, and in the next few centuries is found in a saint's life to mean a monk's belt, a synonym to *cingulum* in the very general sense used also by Gregory of Tours. In this general sense it comes to denote as we saw in the Pisa document, and probably in the *Life of Eligius*, an expensive or even golden belt as well, so it is not always the strap-belt of the monk. It can also be a belt equivalent to the *cingulum* or *zona* (in the sense found in Gregory), as in the *Life of Germanus*; it can have a rich purse connected to it; but it has no similarity to the elaborate strap system of the *brachiale* described by Isidore. All these examples so far seem to agree as to both the secular and monastic, non military, but masculine, use of the *bracile* as an everyday belt - used as a term in vulgar Latin - a golden or expensive one if the man was affluent enough, but with a far simpler pattern than the one described by Isidore. Then, it is found in the 10th century as a belt strap joining the scabbard to the baldric at Gerald's side. *Bracile* thus embraces all aspects of life, including the swords of soldiers; Isidore clearly had an object in mind that soon became obsolete or was never popular in his time. All the later authors use the word with Benedict's not Isidore's definition. No matter what *bracile* meant originally, probably just a strap, it became in time another synonym of the *cingulum* in its generic sense, with all the previous meanings converging, in opposition to Isidore's belt, in form and use.

Cingulum and *balteus/balteum* are generic terms with multiple meanings, yet a number of points have been established so far and we can start to make out some elements pertaining to the main conditions of their use, the form they can take in reality, and the associations between them, either as composite parts of one object or as constituents in a system. We shall go through the sources in roughly chronological order to develop this point. It is not only in Gregory of Tours and in Isidore of Seville that we find a *balteum* mostly accompanied by belt and sword; earlier than that, around the

middle of the 5th century in Sidonius Apollinaris,¹³³ it appears in a poem to honour the emperor Majorian to describe the martial aspect of the Frankish warriors who surround him:

*“ Strictius assutae vestes procera coercent membra virum,
Patet his altato tegmine poples,
Latus et angustum suspendit balteus alvum.
Excussisse citas vastum per inane bipennes...”*

...Close-fitting garments confine the tall limbs of the men: they are drawn up high so as to expose the knees, and a broad belt supports their narrow middle. it is their sport to send axes hurling through the vast void...

The *balteum* is the only type of belt for a man described in the works of Sidonius; it features prominently, this time in prose, in the colourful vestimentary system of the Frankish warriors, comprising leather soldiers' cuirasses over a multicoloured short-sleeved tunic and garter-constricted boots, in one of the first descriptions of a baldric that we have. This time, the *balteum* appears in the context of a full vestimentary system, that of a Frankish soldier at the end of the 5th century. The occasion is the nuptial cortège of the Frankish prince Sigismer as they enter Lyon in 470.¹³⁴ The way a system of straps forming the baldric and the sword are worn as overrunning a tight fitting coloured

¹³³ In a panegyric in honour of Emperor Majorian (457-461), written in 458, there is a description of the martial appearance of the Franks here also called Scythians-poetic license- to stress their martial barbarity; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina* V, (MGH) *Auct. Antiquiss.* 8, p. 193, 245, (trans.), Anderson W.B., (ed.), *Sidonius Apollinaris, Poems and letters*, 2 vols., (Cambridge, 1927), p. 83.

¹³⁴ Idem, *Epist.* I, 20, (MGH) *Auct. Antiquiss.* 8, pp. 70-71, in the letter n° 20 to his friend Domnicus the whole vestimentary system of the Frankish soldier as the Franks of prince Sigismer enter Lyon in 470: “... *illum equus quidem phaleris comptus, immo equi radiantibus gemmis onusti antecedeabant vel etiam subsequebantur, cum tamen magis hoc ibi decorum conspiciebatur, quod cursoribus suis sive pedisequis pedes et ipse medius incessit, flammeus cocco rutilus auro lacteus serico, tam cultui tanto comma rubore cute concolor. Regulorum autem sociorumque comitantum forma et in pace terribilis; quorum pedes primi perone sactoso talos adusque vinciebantur; genua crura suraeque sine tegmine praeter hoc vestis alta stricta versicolor vix appropinquans poplitibus exertis; manicae sola brachiorum pincipia velantes; viridantia saga limbis marginata puniceis; penduli ex umero gladii balteis supercurrentibus strinxerant muniebantur, clausa bullatis latera rhenonibus...*”

...Before him went a horse gaily caparisoned: other horses laden with flashing jewels preceded or followed him. But the most gracious sight in the procession was the prince himself marching on foot amid his runners and footmen, clad in gleaming scarlet, ruddy gold, and pure-white silk, while his fair hair, glowing cheeks, and white skin matched the colours of such bright dress. The princellings and allies who escorted him presented an aspect terrifying even in peacetime. Their feet from toe to ankle were laced in hairy shoes; knees, shins, and calves were uncovered: above this was a tight-fitting multi-coloured garment, drawn up high, and hardly descending to their bare houghs, the sleeves covering only the upper part of the arm. They wore green mantles with crimson borders. Their swords suspended from the shoulders by overrunning baldrics pressed against sides girdled with studded deer-skins. (trans.) Anderson W.B., *Sidonius Apollinaris, Poems and letters*, 2 vols., (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 136-139.

garment is described in great detail; this has sides or a bodice of deer skin or leather amplified with metal studs; in reality the upper body is clothed and protected throughout by a system of straps. The extensive use of leather, the straps and the baldric, and also the colourfulness and the shortness of the garment, the red and green mantles, are the most peculiar and important parts in the dress of the Frankish warrior as seen through the eyes of the Gallo-Roman patrician.

Another early description of the middle of the 6th century, in the Greek text of Agathias,¹³⁵ mentions similar elements of the Frankish dress and how the sword is dangling on their left side, but the stress is on their effective and unique weaponry, and not on their baldrics. At the same time as Gregory and Isidore, however, in the saints' lives of Venantius Fortunatus depicting soldiers and courtiers (a count in one case),¹³⁶ or the golden *balteum* of the *optimates* in the later *Life of Saint Filibert*, the evidence can support the argument that a *balteus* is usually accompanied by a baldric and a sword; or it is a baldric with metal fittings; or it can be a synonym to the *cingulum militiae secularis* found in the Frankish Capitularies of the 9th century.¹³⁷ There it is used to denote men who are not clerics (and do not escape the monastery to join the army), and it is equated with the insignia of both the secular administrator and of the army of the realm. In 8th-10th century saints lives such as the *Life of Landibert*, the *Life of Maurus* and the *Life of*

¹³⁵ Compare with the dress and armour of the Franks of the army of Théodebert in the campaign of 539 in Italy against the Byzantines as it appears in Agathias, op.cit., note 56.

¹³⁶ As in *Vita Germani episcopi Parisiaci, auctore Venantio Fortunato*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer.* 7, 385, 5 : “*Qui fellis amaritudine suscitatus acerrime, balteum suum, ad sancti vestigia proiecit.*”, “and 391, 1: “*Mox balteum quo cingebatur ut spatam pro munere beato Germano contra dedit quod ipse comis, dato praetio post redemit.*”, *Vita Filiberti Abbatis Gemeticensis et Heriencis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 585, 1: “*Tunc ille nobilitatis lampade fulgens consortium indeptus est Audoini optimatis qui sub aureo balteo Deum valde diligens.*”.

¹³⁷ In reference to the prohibition of public office and of the wearing of its insignia to the ones found guilty on pain of excommunication: *Synodus Papiensis* (850), in *Addimenta ad Capitularia Regum Italiae*, Krause V., Boretius A. (eds.) (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 12, p. 120. “*Hoc autem omnibus christianis infimadum est, quia hi qui sacri altaris communione privati, et pro suis sceleribus referendis aditibus exclusi, publicae penitentiae subiungati sunt, nullo militiae secularis uti cingulo, nullamque reipublicae debeant administrare...Sed si ad hoc inrevocabile iudicium abdurati cordis contemptus trahit, non sine magna tamen examinatione...provincialium episcoporum communi iudicio quemlibet anathematizandum esse permittimus.*”, see the ecclesiastical legislation revealing the dress boundaries between the secular world and the ecclesiastical in *Decretum Vermeriense* (758-768), in *Pippini Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A. (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 16, p.41, “*Ut arma clerici non portent*”, also in *Concilium Vernense* (755), in *Pippini Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* I, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 11, p. 35, “*Clericos in ecclesia militantes ... non licere in alterius civitatis ecclesia vel in potestate laicorum militari, sed ibidem permanere in qua principium ministrare meruit.*”

Radbod, magnates and soldiers run towards the monastery - instead of running away from it - to take off their belt “*milites regni milicie cingulo*”, “*clarissimi comitis milicie cingulo*”, and place it on the altar to exchange it with a monk’s habit; here the *cingulum milicie* is probably the equivalent to a baldric.¹³⁸ It seems that this whole set of straps, metal distributors, studs and thongs, can generically be called a *cingulum militiae*, which is the term usually employed in the legislation of the 7th -9th centuries¹³⁹ in the efforts to enforce dress boundaries between the secular and the ecclesiastical world. It is also a metaphor, as we have seen, at times for the secular life in general; but in these and other cases it is a distinct composite artefact, objectifying the values inherent in the metaphor,¹⁴⁰ as real as the heavy bejewelled belt that is found in the Saint Gall *Formulae*.¹⁴¹ There are thus instances where this could refer to a real heavy (sword) belt; or it could be used as a metaphor for public office of a civilian as in the Roman period. The more common signifier of that public office, however, may well have been the term *cingulum*, as we saw previously in the case of Eligius the royal treasurer, and not *balteum*.

It seems that Gregory’s system fits with an earlier tradition of strictly military *baltea*, as found in Sidonius, and given as the synonym of *cingulum militare* in Isidore. Gregory, as we have seen, does not use *cingulum militiae* in this sense, as a soldier’s

¹³⁸ The same term is found in Saints’ lives: *Vita Radbodi*, (MGH) SS 15, 579, 10, 9: “*milites regni militiae cingulo praecincti...*” *Vita Mauri*, Odo Abbatis Glannafoliensis, AASS, Jan 1, II, 321-332, cap. 51, 8: “*Florus ingressus in religionem;...beato Mauro et omni congregatione, Rege quoque ex altera parte, quae cum illo venerat; ac cingulum militiae, quo eatenus usus fuerat, deponens super altare misit.*”; in dramatic conversions of penitents : *Vita Landiberti episcopi Traiectensis auctore Nicolao*, (MGH) Scr rer Mer 6, 415, 15 : “*...cur clarissimi comitis adeo immutatum penitusque successum est celestes patrie desiderio, ut abiecto milicie cingulo...in clericali habitu ascribi voluerit...*”.

¹³⁹ See notes 137, 138, for more examples of the term “*cingulum militiae*” see *Concilium Moguntinum* (847), in *Additamenta ad Capitularia Regum Franciae Orientalis*, Krause V., Boretius A., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 20, p. 181; *Concilium Clippiacense* (626-627), Maassen F., (ed.), (MGH) *Conc Aevi Merovingici* I, (Hannover, 1892), clause 18, p. 199; *Episcoporum de poenitentia, quam Hludovicus Imperator professus est, Relatio Compediensis* (833), in *Additamenta ad Hludowici Pii Capitularia*, Krause V., Boretius A. (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (eds.), (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 8, p. 55; Walafridus Strabo, *De exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum*, Boretius A., Krause V., (eds.), *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 20, p. 504.

¹⁴⁰ See pp. 183-184, 192-193 for the discussion on the use of the metaphor of *balteum* /*cingulum milicie* for secular life .

¹⁴¹ Probably a Formulary compiled originally at 720-730 at Meaux, but used well into the next centuries, (the copy referred to here could be dated to the middle of the 8th century) : “*Precaria ad superscriptam cartam*”, *Collectio Sangallensis*, (MGH) *Formulae*, p. 405, 14, : “*Complacuit mihi...ut hoc firmitus consistat, do eidem patri meo unum balteum ex auro et lapidibus preciosis affecto vel unum cavallum 60 solidos valente ... quod sit in testimonium inter me et ipsum et reliquos fratres meos...*”.

baldric in the way that they are distinguished in Isidore. He uses only *balteum* to denote that. Gregory's definition of a *cingulum* is probably something that can be worn by everybody, even by military men when they are not armed, and shows the overlapping of identities that is not clear in the system of Isidore, because the latter is using different terms for each different role. Gregory's more inclusive and ambivalent system continues in the law codes, the *Formulae* and the military contexts from the saints' lives presented above, either as a metaphor - even if Gregory himself does not use the *cingulum militiae* as a metaphor for public and/or military office anywhere - or as a real object. Up to a point, later writers seem to follow Gregory's system rather than Isidore's; on the other hand, some later writers use the *cingula* and the *zoniae*, the generic forms by Isidore's definition, for the everyday belts of civilians, as does Audoin in the *Life of Eligius*, and adhere to the clear-cut military sense of the *balteum*, as in the example from the *Life of St Filibert*. Isidore does not use *cingulum militiae* metaphorically either: the public servants in the *Etymologies* wear the obsolete *limus*, the soldiers *baltea*. His main difference with Gregory is also founded on their difference in genre: his definitions are clinical interventions, compared to the complexity of everyday discourse of Gregory's narrative.

When the *cingulum militiae* and the *balteum militiae* are used in a metaphorical context, to mean the office, whether military or secular, *per se*, it is very rarely used by the same author as synonyms. Most writers indeed prefer to use for metaphors the multiple derivatives of the verb “cingo” and the varieties of the *cingulum*, instead of a *balteum*.¹⁴² It seems that office-holding is most clearly associated with the *cingulum* throughout our time span, and that the *balteum* normally refers to real baldrics. Nevertheless, there are two instances where they perhaps are used as synonyms. Earlier than Gregory and Isidore, Jerome uses the terms “*balteum castitatis*” and “*cingulum*

¹⁴² Some of the most popular metaphors are : “*cinctorium carnis*” and “*serviles cinctorium*” in Fulgentius, see note 187; “*cingulo spiritalis*” in Eucherius, see note 178; “*cingulum militiae caelestis*” in Gelasius, see in note 186; “*cingulum dignitatis*” in Cassiodorus, see note 179; all these are derivatives of “cingo” with the exception of Tertullian's “*zona Domini*”, see note 175. To exemplify how these metaphors function in a text, I will employ here the rare case of the metaphorical use of the “*balteo aureo*” of Audoin the bishop of Rouen, in the *Life of St Filibert of Jumièges*, signifying the splendour of his episcopal power, held under the love of God: “*Tunc ille nobilitatis lampade fulgens consortium indeptus est Audoini optimatis, qui, sub aureo balteo Deum valde diligens, inter reliquos regni procures valde habebatur illustris et, praefulgentibus vitae meritis, cathedram subiit Rodomagensium civitatis et nunc virtutum signis, fulgorante radio, coruscate in terries.*” *Vita Filiberti Abbatis Gemeticensis et Heriencis*, Levison W. (ed.), (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, (Hannover, 1910), p. 585, 5.

castitatis” interchangeably – the latter of which is found on its own again in Rufinus of Aquileia,¹⁴³ in his *Letters* and the *Comments in Joel*.¹⁴⁴ Much later, Walafrid Strabo in the middle of the 9th century in his work on ecclesiastical legislation *De exordiis et incrementis* uses both *balteum* and *cingulum* in the same entry to refer in this case to ecclesiastical office.¹⁴⁵ The *balteum* is used in his system functionally: it fastens the three inner vestments while the liturgical *cingulum* is worn ostentationally over *dalmatica*, *alba* and *orarium*. These examples, taken from the two most distant points in our time span, show that the terms could be near synonyms when given the same qualifier, and found in the same context. In these cases, the Isidorian multi-term system generated more and perhaps was more appropriate than Gregory’s system, which included fewer forms but more oppositions.

The belt-buckle and the counter plate were possibly called a *fibula*,¹⁴⁶ which can explain the confusion which was caused to Salin, and Chadwick-Hawkes and Crowfoot, by this deployment of this term by Isidore - although he makes very clear distinctions as to where this dress accessory is located in a dress system and in this case, in his only explicit reference to gender.¹⁴⁷ Almost all the cases so far address the vestimentary systems of men, because in this paradigm, the word sets of Gregory of Tours and of Isidore of Seville concerned the types of belts mostly worn by men. Gregory very rarely describes women’s dress; but in *De ornamentis capitis feminarum*, Isidore makes an interesting differentiation: if only men wear *fibulae* at the shoulders or as a belt-buckle at the waist-belt, which here is the term *cingulum*, his generic term, and since

¹⁴³ Rufinus Aquilae, *Origenis Leviticum Homiliae*, Migne P., (ed.), PG 12, 4, 6: “...luxuriam cingulo castitatis restringere...”.

¹⁴⁴ Hieronymus Histriensis, *Epistulae*, 65. 22, “sacerdos ...accingatur balteo castitatis”, CSEL 54, p. 55 And also twice more in idem, *Commentariorum in Joel*, 1, 9, CSEL 34, p. 58, and p. 52.

¹⁴⁵ Walafridus Strabo, *De exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum*., Boretius A., Krause V., (eds.), (MGH) *Cap Regum Francorum* II, (Hannover, 1883-1897), clause 20, p. 504:

“Numero autem suo antiquae respondent quia, sicut ibi tunica, superhumeralis linea, superhumerae, rationale, balteus, feminalia, thyra et lamina, sic hic dalmatica, alba, mappula, orarium, cingulum, sandalia, casula et pallium...”

¹⁴⁶ Perhaps the *subfibulum* can be the catch plate of the pin of the brooch, or the counter-plate in the case of the buckle as we discussed earlier, see note 102.

¹⁴⁷ See note 100, op. cit., *de cingulis*, and discussion on the terms of girding used for women in this p. 171 and 179. For the term *fascia* (breastband), Isidore quotes from Virgil *Aeneid*. 4. 137. Isidore takes up discussions on women’s clothing separately elsewhere, as we have seen, in *De paliis feminarum*, op. cit., Chapter 2, note 78 and in *De ornamentis capitis feminarum*, Lib. XIX, c. xxxi, 6-19.

women wear only brooches (*fibulae*) on their chest, then it seems that the women he describes do not wear belts with buckles. But what is he describing? What did women wear in his time and later?

The archaeology, and other writers who may have been influenced by the systems set out in our paradigm, attest to quite the opposite; women did wear belts and buckles and girdles, according to the definitions set out earlier.¹⁴⁸ The only term from these definitions I will not use here is the baldric, which has been discussed already.¹⁴⁹ There was never an instance in the early middle ages where a woman is represented in a narrative source or in other types of source to have been wearing a baldric, after the classical writers who wrote about goddesses in armour and Amazons.¹⁵⁰ Isidore seems to be describing a long out-moded classical model, probably that of the *matrona stolata*;¹⁵¹ and the belt or the girdle is not prominent in classical art. On the contrary, in other writers, when we have descriptions of women's clothing we are almost always informed about their belts or girdles, as we shall see shortly. The words in the sources that describe these belts are the *cingulum* and the *zona* only, that is, fewer types than the men's belts. The belt with the most synonyms, the *cingulum* - and *zona* is one of these synonyms - that we encountered in Isidore and as the most inclusive term in Gregory, was used for a woman's belt most often.

This chapter, on the empirical material of belts and girdles, started with three items of probably women's clothing, and for the time being this is all that we have left

¹⁴⁸ See pp. 172-173 where I set out the system that is used to understand the different forms, usages and the functions of belts for men and women and used to transliterate on this basis the latin terms in English.

¹⁴⁹ See the discussion on the baldric and the *balteum* above, pp. 173-182, for the comparison between the uses of the word signifying the object and the ways the object was worn.

¹⁵⁰ Goddesses in armour or dressed for hunting are Minerva or Diana or even Venus -the one surnamed *Zostiria* in metaphor of the war of love-. This can be either a plated belt worn as armour or a real *cingulum* as worn over the Roman cuirass. In the former sense as a girdle, it can be worn by women but in all known instances, these women are amazons (so, it is still used in the previous sense): on the *balteus* of Hippolyta in Lucanus. *Bellum civile*. 2. 362, "*Amazonio caelatus balteus auro...*"; Ovidius. *Epistulae* 21.119; Deianira's *balteus* in Seneca. *Hercules Furens*. 543, or the belt of Venus in Apuleius. *Metamorphoses*. 2.8; Martialis. *Epigrammata*. 14. 207. 2.

¹⁵¹ The *matrona stolata* did not wear a belt, (wore the sleeveless *stola* and a *palla*, over her tunic) but this type of dress of the females of the Roman élites fell into disuse after the 3rd century. (Delmaire, see note 66). But even in Rome, women wore sleeved tunics constricted with a belt, and in Italy, generally from the 4th century onwards, sometimes caught at the shoulders with two *fibulae* which in the early 6th century were adopted by Italian women in general as also the square buckle plates found originally in the Ostrogothic costumes but used more broadly as evidenced by female burials in Rome, on the Oppian hill and as the material from the Crypta Balbi shows. (Arena M.A., Delogu P., et alii, *Museo Nazionale Romano, Crypta Balbi*, (English edition), (Milan, 2000), pp. 49-99, esp. pp. 52, 66 and figs passim.)

from the garments of the early Middle Ages. It seems at least ironic that we have fewer definitions and descriptions of women's belts and clothing systems in the texts. These mostly appear from the 8th century onwards, and writers like Aldhelm, Angilbert, Agnellus of Ravenna¹⁵² focus on jewellery and on what is worn on the head. This is an important element of differentiation in the stylistic messaging system between the man and the woman that same period, because we learn a lot about men's dress and especially their belts and buckles, as we have seen.

The woman's belt does not adhere to the definitions that we have, and it probably took many forms, as we saw earlier in the examination of the extant garments, following fashion, beliefs, and the changes in the clothing system it constricted and formulated. Some of these can never be retrieved, like the sashes and some girdles, which would be lost to us entirely but for the hints of the material record, like the chatelaines, the belt strap-ends, or the loopholes and the amplified seams at the sides that showed where these were girded on the woman. But others can be discussed lexicographically. Following the discussion of the oppositions between *balteum* and *cingulum*, I will now discuss the two other words in the paradigm, *cingulum* as against *zona*, to bring out the categories of people, this time including women, who appear to have used them - although more briefly, for the information is less dense.

The *cingulum* on its own is found in an impressive number of saints' lives in a monastic or ecclesiastical context, for men (but not for women) in holy orders;¹⁵³ and

¹⁵² See Chapter 2: Aldhelm, op.cit., note 249, Angilbert, op.cit., note 106, Agnellus, op.cit., note 45.

¹⁵³ The *cingulum* is found to be a part of the dress as well of every aspect of monastic and ecclesiastical life, of all ranks, for men mostly and royal women, found in the descriptions of dress in festivities, miracles and prosecution, See *Vita S. Remedii auctore Venantio Fortunato, Carmina*, (MGH) *Auct Antiquiss* 4, 1, p. 73, 8, 10: "...cingulum revitatis..."; in descriptions of torture: *Vita Galli Auctore Wettino*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 4, 276, 5: "...prospexerunt ad corpus sancti Dei, in quo cernebant per tracturam cinctorii carnem vulneratam per quatuor loca, in modum cinguli corpus gyrante vulnere usque ad interiora ossa" the same word is used for royal secular women: see *Vita S. Balthildis Reginae*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer*. 2, 492, 5: "*Cingulum auri ponderatum fractum dat opus in pauperum...*"; *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, 361, 1: "...sed et ipsum regale, quo cingebatur, cingulum a sacris lumbis abstulit fratribusque in eleemosinam direxit..."; Saint Waldabert in a dream is given the belt of an angel in *Vita Sadalbergae Abbatisae Laudunensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 65, 15: "...in speciem venerabilis viri Waldeberti ut ...angelus Domini apparuit ei tertio, qui cingulum eius [vidit] et de renibus abstractum secum detulit quod cingulum ulterius non comparuit..."; in prosecution: *Vita Germani Abbatís Grandivallensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 39, 15: see note 125, p. 163 and *ibid*: "*Vix a suis deportatus monasterio advenit, ...aspexit cingulum Germanem parientem pendentem.*"; in the transfer of abbatial power: *Vita Patrum Iurensium, Romani, Lupicini, Eugendi*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 3, 9, 157, 20: "*Soluta namque Beatus Romanus sancti illius cingulo constringit ilico lumbos Eugendi*", exactly as the King had done towards the courtier when it is stated that he had given him the clothes and belt he gave away to the poor in *Vita Eligii Episcopi*

cingulum has the preponderance in this genre over the military *balteum*. It is a part of church life, used by monks and – in particular - abbots and saints to keep their habit or vestments in place during prayer, contemplation, festivities and miracles, transfer of holy office, persecution, torture and glorified visions. It is the belt Merovingian Queens and abbots wear: both Radegundis and Balthild wear, distribute to the poor and offer to the Church, *cingula*. In those cases, it is described as metallic and heavy,¹⁵⁴ but when it is the abbot's belt it is described as something wide and luxurious,¹⁵⁵ worn around the middle or lower at the hips in the transfer of abbatial office in the *Life of St Eugendus*.¹⁵⁶ It could, however, also be a multifunctional object, used interchangeably with a *bracile*, the monk's belt-strap,¹⁵⁷ as in the *Life of St Germanus*¹⁵⁸ and we cannot guess at its form in each case. The *cingulum* of this kind can have a sheath for knives or tools.¹⁵⁹

This specific belt might be of leather, but perhaps not of linen, because according to another older tradition in the monastic rules, which adheres to Egyptian vestimentary principles, the word there is “*balteolum lineum*”, a linen girdle.¹⁶⁰ It is only encountered once though, and was probably never popularized. In secular contexts it can have metallic fittings; it can also be embroidered, bejewelled and tablet-woven with silk and gold threads as we saw in the *Life of Eligius*. In a secular context, there is evidence, probably

Noviomagensis, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 4, I, 679, 10, see note 116, p.183; The belt was worn by the Saint before torture: *Ferrandus, Vita Fulgentii*, AASS *Jan I*, 32-45, cap. 26: “(Ferrandus) laureis adornatus tanto amplius cingulis exhibuisse laudabiliter humilitatem...”.

¹⁵⁴ See *Vita S. Balthildis Reginae*, op.cit., note 153.

¹⁵⁵ *Ferrandus, Vita Fulgentii*, AASS *Jan I*, 32-45, cap. 26, see note 153.

¹⁵⁶ *Vita Patrum Iurensium, Romani, Lupicini, Eugendi*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer*.3, 9, 157, 20, op.cit., note 153.

¹⁵⁷ See the discussion and the examples from the sources in pp. 186-190 pertaining to the monastic *bracile* and notes 123-129.

¹⁵⁸ Descriptions of *cingulum* in monastic contexts of work probably a synonym of *bracile*: *Vita Germani Abbatís Grandivallensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer*. 5, 39, 15, see notes 125, 153; *Vita Lantberti abbatís Fontanellensis et episcopi Lungdunensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 520, 25: “...cingulum sibi solvere...”, “cingulum quo vulgo bracile vocantur...”; in everyday life: *Vita Leobae, Rudolfi Fuldensis*, ASOB III, 2, 246, 1-2, : “Monachus apices in cingulo scripsit...”; in prayer: *Vita Germani Episcopi Autissiodorensis, auctore Constantio*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 7, 253, 4 : “Noctibus numquam vestitum, raro cingulum, raro calciamenta detraxit”; ibidem, 281, 15: “...disrumpere quod superfuerat maluerunt: unus palium, cingulum alter accepit, duo tunicam, duo saculum diviserunt.”; *Vita Sancti Aviti confessoris*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 3, 383, 10: “...ipse famulans singulariter, semper ut consuerat abbatem thoro deponere, accipiens cingulum clavesque...”.

¹⁵⁹ A *balteum* is used for swords, sometimes in combination with the *cingulum* as we saw in Gregory of Tours, see discussion pp. 173, 176-178.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter 2, Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Rule of Saint Pachomius*, op.cit., note 50, pp. 66-67: “duo lebitonaria (quod Ægyptiis monachis genus vestimentis est sine manicis) et unum jam attritum ad dormiendum, vel operandum; et amictum lineum, cucullos duos; et caprinam pelliculam, quam melotem vocant; balteolum lineum, et calligas, ac bacillum itineris socium”. This linen girdle, constricted the linen *lebitonaria*, that is the linen *colobium* these monks wore.

in the 8th century, for a belt, here a “*cinctorium*”, of a possessed young woman of a ducal family, tormenting and cutting her, probably because it was made of metal or leather.¹⁶¹ (We must note that our evidence of women’s belts describes prominent women only.)

The *zona* is a belt that can be precious and stately, in the context of a poem¹⁶² describing the girdle of a rich young woman devoted to God; and interchangeable with the *cingulum* of a courtier like Eligius;¹⁶³ and amongst the dress items of an early 10th-century bishop as found in a donation;¹⁶⁴ but it never serves as a symbol of military function. Later writers adhere to the definition of Isidore, that it is a synonym of *cingulum*. *Zona* is a rare word, however, and very rarely is it to be found in a context that implies that it is made of leather or that it is adjoined to a sheath - we never hear of metal straps attached to it at all - a purse seems to be much more appropriate.¹⁶⁵ The writers who use it follow Isidore’s definition, but most writers prefer to use the *cingulum* instead, the most inclusive term of both Gregory and Isidore, for secular men and women.

¹⁶¹ This is one of the first versions of the *Vita Galli Auctore Wettino*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer.* 4, probably written in the 8th century to refer to events happening in the early 5th century: “... *prospexerunt ad corpus sancti Dei, in quo cernebant per tracturam cinctorii carnem vulneratam per quatuor loca, in modum cinguli corpus gyrante vulnere usque ad interiora ossa...*”.

¹⁶² As in the poem of Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* Lib.VIII, *De Virginitate*, p. 271, (MGH) *Auct. Antiquiss* 4:

“*Pulchra topaziacis oneratur zona lapilis The lovely girdle was decorated with topaz gems
chrysolitha aurata fibula claudit acu, the gold-gilt chrysolith brooch pinned down
veste superposita: bis cocto purpura bisso to close the dress worn over: the girl who was to
quale nupta deo ferre puella potest.*” wed God could put on her twice- dyed purple silk.

But, in another description of equally idealized secular, non-military elite male clothing in the verse *Vita S. Martini*, by the same poet, the term is *balteum* instead of *zona* or *cingulum*, *ibidem*, *Carmina*, Lib. II, p. 329, lines 450-460:

“*Lacteus iste toga, rutilus micat ille corona, His milk-white toga, his crown glittering fiery red,
...hos chlamys...illos armilla topaza decorat, his chlamys.. and arm-band decorated with topaz,
balteum huic radiat...*” the belt shone bright...

¹⁶³ See note 116, *Vita Eligii*, 678, 20, (see *ibidem*, 677, 10), he is presented to be giving away to the poor, his “*cingulum at amphibalum*”; as we saw earlier, when in holy orders, at least at the times when Audoin, was composing the *life of Eligius*, in the middle of the 7th century, it is much more common to call the belt of an abbot, a bishop or a saint, *cingulum* rather than a *zona*.

¹⁶⁴ Donation of the bishop Riculf of Elne in Languedoc, to his church:, 9 December 915 : “...*caligas et scandalia paria III, amictos cum auro III, albas V, ...zonas V, una cum auro et gemmis preciosis, et alias quatuor cum auro, stolae III cum auro...*”, *Cartulaire de l’ église d’ Elne*, f° 102, v. 4, f° 43, Devic C., Vaissette J., (éds.), *Preuves de l’Histoire Générale de Languedoc*, t. IV, p. 136.

¹⁶⁵ See *zonas* in the same hoard of words : “...*zonas ex auro et gemmis conpositas necnon et bursas eleganter gemmatas...*”, *Vita Eligii*, *op.cit.*, note 116, I, 678, 20.

Zona, in the 6th and early 7th centuries, can be both secular and ecclesiastical, and evidence such as the above indicates that it is worthwhile to enquire more about the gender and status contexts within which this form of belting, as well as the other alternatives, operated as signs in a stylistic exchange information system.¹⁶⁶ We will discuss further in detail the function and material form of the belt types later on, after we place the usage of the lexis of belting within a time-frame.

The main focus of consideration when dealing with these terms, and the meaning assigned to them in a number of different sociolinguistic contexts, must be the establishment of broad social categories of which some of these terms or all of them are recognised as main attributes. This is because these social categories probably used a legible visual messaging system, understood by most people of their times, in their vestimentary idioms to describe others and themselves. As we saw earlier, the *cingulum* and the *balteum* can have different or overlapping meanings, because they are the main attributes of clothing systems that encapsulate and express simultaneously multiple social and personal identities. We need now to survey how the whole system of words slowly changed across our period. Special attention will be paid here to the intermediate categories, as they may do more to reveal the political and the ideological elements in the use of the belt: that is, the nature of a person's relationship to his or her contemporaries. Again we will proceed roughly chronologically; and some repetition with previous discussion is inevitable.

The other concern here will be the consistency with which different authors are using a term; in particular, whether they employ *cingulum* or *balteum* interchangeably.¹⁶⁷

In classical and post-classical Roman authors, a *cingulum* is a sword-belt and

¹⁶⁶ See second section in this Chapter, 3.3 A brief critique of stylistic criteria and hierarchies of artefact values, pp. 157-167.

¹⁶⁷ As was argued above in the cases of Gregory of Tours and Isidorus we might get this impression because most of the time we do not pay attention to the usage of specific words within a specific context, and we cannot easily compare different nuances embedded in the meaning of a word within different texts of the same author and attempt an intertextual interpretation.

metonymically the soldier's service,¹⁶⁸ or the girdle encircling the hips of women, especially brides.¹⁶⁹ *Balteus/balteum* is the sword-strap, the baldric and the belt generally.¹⁷⁰ The girdle for women and priests is the *zona*.¹⁷¹ On this basis, in the Vulgate, Exodus 28:4, it is a *balteus* and not a *cingulum* that is used to describe the belt of the Hebrew priests¹⁷² and this must be the direct influence of the translator, Jerome, who is using this image as a sign of *militia Christi*,¹⁷³ although it is actually Augustine¹⁷⁴ who is the first to introduce this term in its metaphorical sense of the celestial militia. Tertullian, earlier,¹⁷⁵ uses *zona* instead to denote sacerdotal office.¹⁷⁶ All these terms seem to co-exist in the Vulgate and in early Christian authors, but the first nuances of further distinctions have their roots there too. In secular and ecclesiastical authors of the late 5th century, like Rufinus of Aquileia¹⁷⁷ and Eucherius of Lyon,¹⁷⁸ *cingulum* is also found in metaphors of severe divine justice. In this post-classical sense, *cingulum* is now invested with the signifier of the judge and this is much more visible in the authors of the 6th century who replace the linguistic metaphor and imagery of the divine judge with the

¹⁶⁸ Vergilius. *Aeneid*. 12. 142, and in the same sense it is used in *Codex Justinianus. Corpus iuris civilis* II, Krueger P., (ed.), (Berlin, 1929), 17, 3; 38, 1, 12 and for further analysis and examples, see Delmaire, op.cit., note 66.

¹⁶⁹ Varro. *M.T.De Lingua Latina*. 5. 114, Vergilius. *Aeneid*. 1. 92.

¹⁷⁰ In classical authors is an elaborately decorated shoulder-band or baldric for supporting a sword or /and a quiver or an instrument: metonymically means a blow with the belt: Caesar. *De Bello Gallico*. 5. 44.7: "...verutum in balteo defigitur..", Vergilius. *Aeneid*. 5. 313; 12.942: "*pharetram quam circum amplectitur auro balteus...*", Tacitus. *Historiae*. 2.288; It can be a plated belt worn as armour for the women rarely, see note 150.

¹⁷¹ Ovidius. *Metamorphoses*. 5. 470 and Pliny. *De Naturalis Historia*. 37. 6.

¹⁷² Exodus 28:4: "...sacro balteo cingimur, dantur nobis opera..." referring to the priestly belt of the Hebrews, which is different according to their rank.

¹⁷³ In Hieronymus Histriensis op.cit., note 144, p. 55. And also in idem, *Commentariorum in Joel*, op.cit., note 144, p.58, p. 52.

¹⁷⁴ Augustinus Hipponensis, "...suscipere cingulum militiae christianae...", *Epistulae* 151, 8, CSEL 34.

¹⁷⁵ "*Zona Domini praecinctus...*", Tertullian, *Adversos Valentinianos*, 12, 2, CSEL 70.

¹⁷⁶ In the Vulgate the term *cingulum* is also used to denote the admission into the sacerdotal order in Isaiah 23:10 and in John 21:58 in a reference to liturgical dress. In Isaiah 11:5 the *cingulum* is the symbol of severe justice.

¹⁷⁷ Rufinus Aquiliae, *Origenis Leviticum Homiliae*, Migne P., (ed.), PG 12, 4, 6: "...luxuriam cingulo castitatis restringere..".

¹⁷⁸ "...cingulo spiritalis operis accinctus...", Eucherius, *Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae.*, CSEL 31, 6.

secular judicial official, as in Cassiodorus,¹⁷⁹ and Antoninus Placentinus in the *Itinerarium*,¹⁸⁰ this last using the word *cingellum* in the same sense.

In the late 6th century, *cingulum* in a literal sense continues: Fortunatus in a number of poems¹⁸¹ and Gregory the Great¹⁸² in his letters describe the attire and the major insignia of the judge, the bejewelled and wide *cingulum* of the very prominent bureaucracy of their times. Saint Fulgentius, in the much revised *Vita*¹⁸³ written by Ferrandus in Carthage before the middle of the 6th century, is judged by the Vandal king Thrasamund, and the belt word for Fulgentius' belt here is the *cingulum* again. This is not different from the imagery accompanying the same word in the expression of divine justice in Antoninus Placentinus¹⁸⁴ and in the description of the high functionary of a province in the letters of Gregory the Great¹⁸⁵ and the celestial judge and his militia in Pope Gelasius one hundred years before.¹⁸⁶

In Fulgentius¹⁸⁷ and the letters of Gelasius we still find the word *cinctorium* for a rather substantial belt, probably a baldric, since we find it in the context of the battle against evil.¹⁸⁸ In Sidonius Apollinaris, the warriors of the élite or their armed followers wear *baltea* over the shoulders.¹⁸⁹ It is of note that the Romans of the heroic past, or the members of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy of his circle, who feature in Sidonius' poems and letters, do not wear *baltea*. It seems that, at least to him, the demonstration of a warlike aspect comes second in priority within his class, and features less often – perhaps it is not within their range – in the agenda of his circle with very few exceptions, such as the (military) emperors Majorian and Avitus.

¹⁷⁹ Cassiodorus Senator, *Phalmos*, PL 70, c. 206, 5, *cingulum* is used in the context of the magistrates in general. Also in idem, *Variae*, 9, 2d, 2, (MGH) *Auct. Antiquiss.* 12, 19, 24, 2, in a metaphorical sense in “*Illustris cinguli dignitate praecinctus historia*” and see ibidem, 17, 12.

¹⁸⁰ Antoninus Placentinus, *Itinerarium*, 18, CSEL 39, where *cingellum* is used in the sense of the investiture of secular public office.

¹⁸¹ Venantius Fortunatus, op.cit., note 162.

¹⁸² Gregorius Magnus, *Ep.* 8, 37, (MGH) *Epp.* II : “*praefecturae cingula suscepisse*,” and idem, *Ep.* 10, 16, “*si quis in quolibet gradu vel cingulo constitutus...*” and idem, *Ep.* 1, (MGH) *Epp.* II, 2.

¹⁸³ Ferrandus, *Vita Fulgentii*, AASS Jan I, 32-45, cap. 26.

¹⁸⁴ See note 180.

¹⁸⁵ See note 182.

¹⁸⁶ Compare Gelasius I, *Epistulae* 20, p. 386, Migne P., (ed.), PL 33, “*caelestis militiae cingulo praecingi...*”.

¹⁸⁷ Fulgentius, *Sermo* 3, “*Serviles cinctorium carnis assumens*”.

¹⁸⁸ The *balteum* is used until the 6th century in a clearly military context, as a synonym of *cinctorium*, or only metaphorically sometimes, under the influence of the topoi of the Vulgate.

¹⁸⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris, op.cit., note 134.

The diminutive and derivative term *balteolus*¹⁹⁰ is used as early as the early 5th century for the small linen girdle used to keep the first known monastic habits in place, in the Latin translation by Jerome of the rule of the monastic life of St Pachomius.¹⁹¹ In the *Rule* of Saint Benedict of Nursia, which was supposed to be applied to the monks of Monte Cassino around 540,¹⁹² the monk gives away his old clothing and receives from the abbot the whole monastic *paramentum* using for ‘belt’ the word *bracile*, which is to be found quite often later in saints’ lives.¹⁹³ Perhaps the simple functional belt, used at work for men (we do not know if it was worn by women and called the same), probably made of leather with a simple buckle, was called a *bracile*, meaning a leather strap.¹⁹⁴

A glimpse into the world of ordinary people is offered in the magical practices described by Caesarius of Arles in *Sermon* 52:¹⁹⁵ magic-workers use, for measuring magic and for magical cures, pieces of (possibly woven) girdles. In all instances of curative practices, in the Christian forms of curative magic too,¹⁹⁶ when a girdle or a belt is used it is of a woven type: it is the linen girdle – although here it is called a *zona* rather than a strap a belt with a buckle- of St Cuthbert that saves sick Abbess Aelfleda

¹⁹⁰ It is used to signify the small girdle of linen in Hieronymus, *Regula St Pachonii ex Graeco*, Cap. 4, p. 67; op.cit., Chapter 2, note 50.

¹⁹¹ See note 190 and 116. This may be the equivalent or the predecessor of the *funiculus*, the rope used in the *Life of Eligius* of Noyon, to gird up his habit made of a dirty cloth, which was written originally in the late 7th century.

¹⁹² See Chapter 2, Benedict of Nursia, op.cit., note 41, II, p. 508. This is the first full account of a monastic vestimentary system in the West, inscribed within the conditions of its use and in detail, compare this with the much more general guidelines described in Caesarius of Arles, *Regula Sanctorum Virginum*, where there is only an effort to prescribe the colours and the materials only of the nuns, (it is only woollen garments, dresses and veils in the natural colours of the fleece, no ornaments other than dark or white crosses, no embroidery on the garments or pattern weaves (*vestes polymitae*) are allowed to be worn once the nuns are cloistered. See Caesarius of Arles, *Regula Sanctorum virginum* (a. 522-534), Morin G., (ed.), (Bonn, 1933), clauses 27, 28, p.11, clauses 44, 45, p. 16 and clauses 55, 56, p. 19.

¹⁹³ Compare the discussion of monastic *bracile* in reference to the system of Isidore in pp. 186-190 and notes 173-178.

¹⁹⁴ See note 153, *Vita Germani abbatis Grandivallensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 39, 15.

¹⁹⁵ “*Illum ariolum vel divinum, illum sortilegum, illum erbariam consulamus; vestimentum infirmi sacrificemus, cingulum qui inspici vel mensurari debeat; offeramus aliquos caracteres, aliquas praecantationes adpendamus ad collum.*” ...Let’s consult this seer or this prophet that sorcerer, that witch; let’s sacrifice a robe of the one taken ill, a belt that can be examined and measured; let’s offer this amuletic ligature, let’s suspend from the neck these magic formulas... Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons au peuple, Sources Chrétiennes* 243, t. II, (trans.), Delage M.J., (Paris, 1978), *Sermo* 52, pp. 25-30.

¹⁹⁶ “Miracle stories bear the imprint of the outlawed and fiercely defended contemporary non Christian form of a communication system with the supernatural”: See Flint V., *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, (Oxford, 1991), p. 310.

according to Bede;¹⁹⁷ The action is described by the terms *succinxit se illa*, probably as the generic sense of belting something derives from the *cingulum*. The fringes, *fimbria*, of the habit of St Genéviève's are the instruments of healing in her *Life*.¹⁹⁸ A woven girdle is more easily cut and distributed, can be more easily hidden in a relic box or hung as a charm, can easily be worn secretly, and is more easily burnt, tied in knots, and untied, than leather. In addition, woven and tablet-woven belts double the action of binding, as weaving in itself was thought of as the supernaturally-charged adjoining of two or more parts.¹⁹⁹ It is not clear if the *cingula* in Caesarius' sermon are only for men or for women, but the context concerns phylacteries, cures and abortions.

Bracile is never found used by a woman anywhere in the sources, although in addition to being the leather belt for manual work, it seems to be also a girdle, and a belt with a bag attached to it, worn by rich people too.²⁰⁰ *Cingulum* could be both of leather and a woven girdle in the middle of the 6th century. It seems that a *balteum* could not be used by ordinary people, because in the saints' lives it only features when soldiers, guards, the clergy, magistrates and aristocrats²⁰¹ are described. In the poems of Fortunatus, *zona* is used in a secular context, once, to describe the bejewelled and embroidered girdle belonging to one of the women of the élite, while he uses *balteus* in the verse *Life of St Martin* as the belt of an aristocrat.²⁰² In his saints' lives, in the *Life of*

¹⁹⁷ Bede, *Life of St Cuthbert*, in *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, Colgrave B., (ed. and trans.), (Cambridge, 1940), c. 23, pp. 230-234. "Et non multo post advenit qui ei zonam lineam ab eo missam deferret. Quae multa gavisa de munere et desiderium suum viro sancto iam coelitus patefactum intelligens, succingit se illa, et mane mox erecta ad standum, tertia vero die plene est reddita sanitati."...Not long afterwards there came one who brought her a linen girdle which he had sent. She greatly rejoiced at the gift and, realising that her desire had been made known to the holy man by heavenly means, she girded herself with it, and in the morning she was able forthwith to stand erect, and on the third day was entirely restored to health..

The term in *Vita Cuthberti*, *ASOB* II, pp. 879-915 is *zona*. See infra notes 213, 214 for the early use of *balteum/balteus ecclesiae* and the other terms such as *zona* used in a few cases, note 164.

¹⁹⁸ *Vita Genovefae Virginis Parisiensis*, Krusch B., (ed.), (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 3, (Hannover, 1896), 231, 20 "Mox Genovefa aquam sibi exhibere iussit. Quam ut accepit, invocato nomen Domini, et ut vixillo cruces signata puerolo infirmo potandam dedit, propitium dominum nostrum Iesum Christum confectim sanus factus est. Plures ea tempestate fide repleti auferentes fimbrias vestimenti eius, a diversis infirmantibus sunt sanati." See the use of the term *fimbria* for magical purposes in Hincmar of Rheims, *De Divortio Lotharii et Theudebergae*, *PL* 125, pp. 718-719.

¹⁹⁹ See Flint V., op.cit., note 196, pp. 308-327. For the different materials found in the archaeology that could be employed in combination to fibres see Appendix III.

²⁰⁰ See the discussion on the *bracile* as worn by the élites in *life of Eligius*, in the Pisa document in reference to Isidorus's definition in pp. 186-190.

²⁰¹ See notes 138, 139, 183, 184, 142, 153.

²⁰² Fortunatus Venantius, *Carmina*, lib. VII, 271 and 188, *De Virginitate*, see note 162 and

Saint Germanus,²⁰³ where he is describing a miracle in favour of Waddo, a member of the Frankish court of Clothild, he uses *balteum* twice in the military elite sense which, as we have seen, seems to be quite restricted and well demarcated by this period. In the *Life of Saint Martin*, in the verse version, he describes a *balteum* that is decorated with jewels, in the context of the description of the vision of the heavenly prince.²⁰⁴ This is however, the only time Fortunatus mentions a non-military *balteum seculare*; *zona* is usually found in his work, as also later, in the *Life of Eligius*. It may have been used out of metrical needs, but certainly in the *Life of Eligius* it was not chosen for metrical reasons, or by association with the patristic traditions of the previous centuries, presenting the heavenly judge as a secular judge. In Fortunatus' *Life of Saint Leobinus*,²⁰⁵ when he mentions the belt of a monk, he uses the word *cingulum*. In the *Life of Saint Remedius*,²⁰⁶ too, it is the *cingulum* that is used in a spiritual metaphor, again in an ecclesiastical context. This means that the *cingulum* could have the generic sense of any form of belt or girdle, as already in the *Sermons* of Caesarius fifty years before. We do not however have explicit evidence for the dress of priests in this period. Priests are reprimanded in a number of Gallic Synods in the 6th and 7th centuries for their lack of tonsure, secular dress, and shoes, their use of weapons and lances, but outside liturgical dress, we do not have direct textual evidence for priestly attire.²⁰⁷

In Fortunatus' *Life of Saint Radegund*, though, we meet a new category. The ceremonial belt of the Queen, the *cingulum regale*²⁰⁸ is an example of a generic use of a *cingulum*, that is found so often in metaphors and used for men and for women alike, for

ibidem, *Vita S. Martini*, lib. II, 329: "*lacteus iste toga, rutilus micat ille corona, hunc praetexta niteus...balteum huic radiat ...*".

²⁰³ Fortunatus Venantius, *Opera Pedestria, Vita Germani episcopi Parisiaci*, (MGH) *Auct. Antiquiss.* 4, 1, p. 14, 13, p. 16, 11.

²⁰⁴ Fortunatus Venantius, op.cit., note 162, lib. II, p. 329, 450-460.

²⁰⁵ Fortunatus Venantius, *Vita Leobini*, 1, 2, (MGH), *Auct. Antiquiss.* 6, 2, 1 "*Monachus apices in cingulo scripsit...*".

²⁰⁶ Fortunatus Venantius, *Vita S. Remedii*, (MGH), *Auct. Antiquiss.* 6, p. 73, 10: "*cingulum revitatis*".

²⁰⁷ The canonical texts refer to the "*vestimenta et calciamenta*": the Council of Mâcon (581-583), canon 5, the Council of Bordeaux, (662-675), canon 1, in *Les Canons des Conciles mérovingiens (VIe-VIIe siècles)*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 353- 354, vol. II, Gaudemet J., Basdevant B., (eds.), (Paris, 1989), pp. 430-431 and pp. 568-569.

²⁰⁸ Fortunatus Venantius, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, op.cit., note 153. We do not have many description of dress, the parts of or the whole clothing system of a king in this period but princes and rulers appear to wear *baltea* and *cingula* see notes 116, 211, 212 where the King Dagobert is giving his belt to Eligius, Chilperic's belts, and when the ruler of Aquitaine, Paulus is being despoiled of his belt.

secular and ecclesiastical use; the difference here is that we know from the description of Fortunatus in the *Life*²⁰⁹ that it is worn by a woman, a Queen admittedly, and that it is a heavy metallic belt of state, possibly with several lengths of golden woven braids and/ or a massive plaque-buckle that was in fashion around the 560's. Evidence for the belts of kings is extremely rare but includes all known words: in one instance, in a poem by Fortunatus, the belt of king Chilperic is described as *zona*,²¹⁰ in the *Historia Wambae regis*, written around 675, the belt of the pretender of Septimania, Paulus, is a *cingulum*.²¹¹ We can presume that if a king like Clovis or Chilperic distributed *baltea*, as in Gregory of Tours, he owned them and wore them himself.²¹² Also, again in a non-metaphorical sense, the first time the word *cingulum* is used for ecclesiastical ceremonies of investiture of abbatial office can be attested in the pre-Merovingian *Vitae Patrum Jurensium*²¹³ that were probably written around the 520's.

In the period between the 4th and the 6th centuries, the term *cingulum* has taken on more meanings; *cingulum* appears all the more to be in parallel use with *zona* and the rarer *balteum ecclesiae*²¹⁴ as a part of the ecclesiastical vestimentary systems of bishops, clergymen, monks. *Cingulum abbatis/ecclesiae* is found in Church Councils and in theological discourse more than ever, as we have seen. There are only two examples of *cinctorium*, in the *Life of Gallus*, first written in the 8th century and rewritten in later

²⁰⁹ See the description of the vestimentary system of the queen and compare the structural elements of the headwear and of the belt in Chapter 2, note 43 and discussion in pp. 74-75, 80-81.

²¹⁰ Fortunatus Venantius, *Ad Chilpericum et Fredegundam reginam, Carmina*, (MGH) *Auct. Antiquiss* 4,1, lib.IX, 120-130: "...et variis gemmis frons diadema geret, utentes niveam per candida pectora pallam, purpuream togam fulgidam zona ligat...".

²¹¹ Paulus, the pretender king of Aquitaine, wore a *cingulum* which he abdicates and also has his hair ceremoniously cut short when vanquished by the Visigothic army of king Wamba around 670, in Julianus Toletanus, *Historia Wambae regis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 520, 25.

²¹² See Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum X Libri*, (MGH), *Scr rer Mer* I, p. 348, II. 92, 5 and VII. p. 337, 1.

²¹³ *Vitae Patrum Jurensium*, Romani, Lupicini, Eugendi, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 3, p. 157, 20, 9, see note 153.

²¹⁴ *Balteum ecclesiae*: see early use in Exodus 28: 4: *balteus* as the belt of Hebrew priests; in Hieronymus Histriensis, *Commentariorum in Joel*, CSEL 34, 1, 9; also idem, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 55, 10 in Augustinus Hipponensis, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 220, 3; in *Sacramentarium, Gelasianum*, Mohlberg L.C., (ed.), *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli*, (Roma, 1968), 241, c. 240, in *Vita Filiberti*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, p. 604, 10: "...sub aureo balteo", as "*balteum*" of St Cuthbert in Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, ASOB II, p.879, and in idem, "*superhumerales strictus erat balteo...*" in *De Tabernaculo et vasis eius, ac vestibibus sacerdotum*, cap. 4, Migne P., (ed.), PL 91, p. 469; in the Appendix of Walafridus Strabo, *Libellus de exordiis et incrementis ecclesiasticarum rerum*, (MGH) *Capit* I, Boretius A., Krause V., (eds.), II, 504, 20; Hrabanus Maurus, *Liber de divinis Officiis*, Cap. 38, 39, *Qui significant vestimenta*, Migne P., (ed.), PL 101, col. 1173-1286, esp. p.1238,: "*De singulis vestibibus quibus sacerdotes vel reliqui ordines...utebantur, balteum, lamina, tiara, superhumerales, vestis orarium etc.*".

versions until the end of the 9th century²¹⁵ and in the *Life of Gerald of Aurillac* written at the beginning of the 10th century.²¹⁶

If we go into the 7th century, there is the secular *cingulum* of the people of means, not of the military, but possibly of artisans, even if the evidence we have points to very privileged courtier artisans and respectable townspeople, as found in the *Life of Eligius*: there is reference to the *cingulum* and also the *zona* of Eligius, and later his *funiculum* and possibly his *zona* when he becomes a bishop.

Up to the 7th century, the linguistic forms, some of the the material forms and the social norms expressed by the belts and the girdles have been presented here, in order to show that social context and social, ideological and political changes indeed dictated the linguistic dispersion of a word, the use of another when there was a need arising, and the way terms became obsolete or restricted. It is important to stress here the multiplication of forms and functions of a basic set of Latin words with a clear-cut meaning and usage, and how these were generated from the 5th century onwards by different authors in different genres. The Vulgate and the monastic *Rules* can be seen to have played a role in the dispersion of new oppositions in the meaning of the words. New conditions also appeared, like the introduction of new forms of belting following changes in dress, and the need to express these new types and the new social categories like priests, monks and hermits in language. So changes in the lexis of belting appeared; the *balteum* is used for aristocrats and for clergymen but also it clearly retains its military character throughout the period; the *cingulum* is attested in the 6th century to be the belt for women too, as well as the *zona* as in the late Roman period; it is used for secular men between the 6th and the 7th century; new terms are coined like the *balteolus*; the *funiculum* finds a new use; and the *bracile* is chosen from its secular contexts to describe new types of objects and to suit the introduction of the first forms of a monastic habit, a new clothing system .

²¹⁵ In the revamped *Vita Galli Vetustissima auctore Wettino Augiensis*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 4, pp. 251-256, in the *Vita altera Galli*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 4, pp. 256-280, esp. in 255, 5 and 276, 5, written in Carolingian Reichenau at the end of the 8th century, in Walafridus Strabo, *Vita Tertia Galli* (a. 833-4), (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 4, pp. 280-337, esp. p. 293, 10 written possibly in Aachen, and copying the previous hagiographer, the daemon possessed daughter of a Duke, Fridiburga, hurts herself with her chain used as a belt, see note 153. “*Cinctorii carnem*” could have been taken from Fulgentius, *Sermo* 3, see supra note 187 because it is very rare but here it adds to the dramatic effect as it is used literally and not metaphorically as in Fulgentius, it is the traces of the tight (iron) belt that were left in four places on the flesh reaching to the bone of the possessed Fridiburga.

²¹⁶ See *Vita Geraldii*, op. cit., Chapter 1, note 6.

The belt, *cingulum*, in its most inclusive form, as a badge of public duty, the belt of the judge, the count and royalty, the abbot and the monk, the bridal girdle, and the artisans and ordinary people's belt and girdle, becomes a crucial element in the linguistic representation of the dress systems of all social categories. For some of these social categories, we have more information about their dress and their role in it; these are the leaders²¹⁷ - Queens and kings, aristocrats of both genders, the rich, bishops, wearing *cingula* and *zoniae*. Some of these social and personal categories, quite clearly include more than one of the Latin words we have examined within the contexts of narratives so far. An official or a king in the 6th century can wear a *balteum* or a *cingulum* or even a *zona*. Conversely, the multiple usage of these terms, their long history and their overlapping meanings, lends the nuance of the secular judge, the aristocrat and the administrator to the bishop; the sacerdotal and the stately to the Queen and to their *cingula*; and also the sumptuous and the elaborate sense of the woman's girdle and purse to the *zona* of the rich civilians. These multiple and overlapping identities appear in the use of the same word that means the soldier's baldric and the belt of office for both soldiers and bureaucrats, in *baltea* and *cingula/cinctoria*.²¹⁸ We get to know a lot more about the new heroes of the period, such as the ascetics, monks, in their leather *bracile* and linen *balteolus* and string *funiculum* that reflect at least two diverse vestimentary traditions of the monastic attire; whereas we hear very little about priests, working people and probably women who seem to wear what is signified by the generic term *cingulum*.²¹⁹ When more than one term appears in the same text, it conveys information about multiple social and personal identities in the same environment, as with the *cingula* of civilians and officials and the *baltea* of aristocrats and/or soldiers in Gregory of Tours, or the intermediate categories of people who change social circumstances and appear to be socially and personally liminal such as Eligius who wore the *zoniae*, *cingula*, *bracile*

²¹⁷ Looking like belts of state and decorated sashes and girdles, worn with a number of inner and outer garments of silk and fine linen and wool, probably pattern-woven and dyed, decorated with embroidery and tablet-woven braids or silk borders. See the descriptions of the dress of Radegundis in op.cit., Chapter 2, notes 43, 59.

²¹⁸ This could have been a leather belt with a buckle and metal fittings as the ones found in élite burials alongside weapons, worn with short tunics and leggings.

²¹⁹ Their *cingula* could be buckled or knotted *cingula* of leather, linen and hemp, and other fabrics over one or two tunics and leggings for the men, compare with the vestimentary system from 6th c. Ravenna reconstituted in this Chapter, section 3.5 esp. Examination of artefacts from testaments, pp.230-232.

and *funiculum* and who ended this circle probably wearing a bishops' *cingulum/zona*. In this period, between the late 5th to the 7th century, there is a preference for certain terms in some genres. *Balteum*, for example, features less often in saints' lives written between the 6th and the 9th century than in the legislation or poetry of the period, in which its use is all the more decidedly that of a baldric; whereas the *cingulum* is found in a great number of examples as an ecclesiastical belt or the much less usual *zona* or the extremely rare *strophium*.²²⁰

The new use of a word that emerges from the sources, after the 7th century, becoming more visible in the middle of the 8th century, is a side-development of the military *balteum* of the warrior élite into the *balteum seculare*. This constitutes the insignia of the office of a duke, which seem to be hereditary if we judge from the will of Eberhard and Gisela of Friuli written in 867. This mentions a significantly unique golden *balteus* with a golden buckle, bequeathed to Eberhard's first-born son Unruoch;²²¹ it is accompanied by an embroidered tunic, and a mantle, and books, that mark out the jurisdictional and administrative aspects of his public office.²²² The other sons get golden and gold and ivory buckles too among many other things. Earlier than that, the same usage is probably reserved for a gold *balteum*, decorated with jewels, a more ceremonial than utilitarian baldric in the Saint Gall *Formulae* of around the 8th century, willed alongside a horse and non-movable property.²²³ The properties of this object, passed down from one generation to the next, seem to be the ostentatious display of status and of office that is transferred to the son, especially the first born. It is likely, in this change of lexis of belting, in the new evidence in this period for a ceremonial rather than military *balteum*, that the clothing system of the count and duke is now standardized. There is

²²⁰ *Strophium* is found only once in Theodulf of Orleans, in a poem. See supra note 118. Probably Isidorus has listed it in the wrong category of waist-belts than adding it in later in his section next to the *vitta* and the *limbus*, the headbands, see discussion pp. 184-185 and notes 119.

²²¹ For more on *Chartae dispositionis* and the analysis of the valuables given to the sons and daughters of the counts, see La Rocca C., Provero L., "The dead and their gifts. The will of Eberhard count of Friuli and his wife Gisela, daughter of Louis the Pious (863-864)", *Rituals of Power from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, TRW 8, (Brill, 2000), pp. 224-280, esp. pp. 240-43.

²²² The golden baldric, *balteus*, as in "*cingula balteis aureis*", was accompanied by a ceremonial gold-embroidered mantle, the official dress of the Duke, and of significant copies of the Bible and the New Testament, the barbarian Law Codes and Vegetius, *Ars Militaris*.

²²³ See note 141 about the Formulary of Saint Gall, n° 133 (compiled around the middle of the 8th century) about the heavy bejewelled belt to be bequeathed in a will, of a potentate probably: "...do eidem patri meo unum balteum ex auro et lapidibus preciosis effecto vel unum cavallum 60 solidos valente...". See note 62 on the Athelstan Atheling's will and belt, in 1015.

further evidence from the late 9th century in the will of Count Eccard of Autun, who bequeaths a gold-adorned baldric to his surviving wife among many books and other objects. The word used for this bejewelled object is again *balteum*.²²⁴ In other texts referring to the belts of the probably military and certainly urban élites of the 8th to the 10th centuries, an ornamental *balteum* can be passed down to females, as we saw earlier in the Pisa document in 797, as if it was just another piece of jewellery, and is listed first among the other items.²²⁵ In this case it does not signal the transfer of hereditary office but only of movable property.

The non-functional and mostly ceremonial baldric, worn with or without a sword, assumes the king's favour and implies the risk of his disfavour. We learn from the letters of Charles the Great about the recipients of gifts of (mostly golden) *baltea* and silk mantles in Mercia to seal an agreement between himself and King Offa.²²⁶ In a later example from late Anglo-Saxon England, the Ætheling Æthelstan bequeaths a golden belt (*balteum*) to one of his attendants, in 1015.²²⁷ The deprivation of such a belt is a severe punishment for royal attendants and followers in this period too as it is inscribed and understood within the system of the courtly or aristocratic practitioners of war; the deprivation of the *cingulum militiae, equis et armis* are considered among the worst of the contemporary canonical penalties.²²⁸ In a scene of the disarmament of the men of Charles the Bald as described in Nithard, in 841, not only their horses but their arms are

²²⁴ The list of objects, mostly offensive weapons and pieces of armour bequeathed by Eccard, Count of Autun, in the late 9th century is included in his will: *Recueil de chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire*, Prou M., Vidier A., (eds.), vol. I, (Orléans et Paris, 1900), p. 64. There was a very interesting collection of books he left to his wife, sister, the Abbess of Faremoutiers and his friends too in this will. These books testify to his connections and multilingualism which has been the subject of a number of studies, see Levillain L., "Les Nibelungen historiques et leur alliances de famille," *Annales du Midi* 49 (1937), pp. 337-407, Riché P., "Les bibliothèques de trois laïcs carolingien," *Le Moyen Age* 69 (1963), pp. 101-103; Hummer H.J., *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000*, (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 147-150. These facts help to put in a more specific cultural perspective the choice of words in the will and the importance of the swordbelt for someone like Eccard.

²²⁵ See note 63 of the *balteus* and the jewellery accompanying it from the context of the will of Pisa, in 797.

²²⁶ As listed in the letter of Charlemagne to Offa, offering protection to pilgrims and merchants and sending important gifts over to his Mercian counterpart Offa and to his court: "*Vestrae quoque dilectioni unum balteum et unum gladium huniscum et duo pallia syrica...*": Charlemagne, *Lettre II*, a. 796, (ed.), Jaffé P., *Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum* 4, (Berlin, 1864), pp. 357-358.

²²⁷ See note 62 on the Æthelstan Ætheling's will and belt, in 1015.

²²⁸ See Nelson J.L., "Ninth-Century Knighthood: The Evidence of Nithard", [repr.] in Nelson J.L., (ed.), *The Frankish World 750-900*, (London, 1996), pp. 79-81 and Leyser K., "Early Medieval Canon Law and the Beginnings of Knighthood", [repr.] in Leyser K., Reuter T., (eds.), *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe, vol. 1: The Carolingian and the Ottonian Centuries*, (London, 1994), pp. 51-71.

taken from them, so that bloodshed can be averted. These two elements are the essentials of their social function and identity²²⁹ and probably wear *cingula balteis* described in this period probably a set of baldric and belt, decorated with jewelled daggers.²³⁰ These might be the descendants of the *viri illustri* like Leunard, the count of the household of Reginth in the late 6th century whose *balteum*, clothes and office are ripped away from him, violently, by Queen Fredegund.²³¹ The term *cingula balteis*, is found once more to be worn by élite clergymen, who are reprimanded for that in the 9th c. and this shows that the *cingula balteis* had a markedly élite secular but not necessarily a military character.²³² Another example of royal punishment, the execution of Count Ambrose in Bergamo, is described by Liutprand of Cremona: the noble official was ordered to be hung still wearing his sword, *balteum* and his armbands and jewellery, probably to mark out the degree of disgrace he had inflicted upon himself, the loss of royal favour and his

²²⁹ The men of Charles the Bald and the deprivation of their public *insignia* in Nithard, *Historiarum libri* IV, (MGH) SSRG 8, Müller E., (ed.), (Hannover, 1956), II, 8, p. 60; “*Nam neque ipse nec quilibet in suo comitatu quicquam absque quod corpore gerebant et absque armis et equis habebant;*”...Because his band of followers had nothing left but the clothes they stood up in, their weapons and horses... and also later on Lothar’s forces are allowed to leave before the confrontation with Charles the Bald and Louis the German’s forces with all their wealth *ibid*, II, 9, p. 68, “*absque equis et armis*”...but for their weapons and horses... Scholze B.W., Roger B., (trans.), *Carolingian chronicles : Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard’s Histories*, (Michigan, 1972), p. 59-61.

²³⁰ Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici Pii imperatoris* Tremp, E., (ed.), (MGH) SSRG 44, (Hannover, 1995), c. 28, p. 378.

²³¹ Gregory of Tours, HF VII. 15, pp. 336-337: Queen Fredegund despoils Count Leunard of the baldric he was given by King Chilperic on the occasion of the betrayal and theft of the princess Reginth and her dowry. “*Resedente vero Fredegunde regina in aeclesia Parisiaca, Leonardus ex domestico [Al. Leonardus domesticus], qui tunc ab urbe Tholosa advenerat, ingressus ad eam, causas contumeliae iniuriasque filiae eius narrare coepit,...Haec illa audiens furore commota, iussit eum in ipsa aeclesia spoliare, nudatumque vestimentis ac balteo, quod ex munere Chilperici regis habebat, discedere a sua iubet praesentia.*”...While Queen Fredegund was still living in the cathedral in Paris, her servant Leunard, who had just come back from the town of Toulouse, called upon her and began to tell her the wrongs being done to her daughter and the various humiliations she was suffering... Fredegund went nearly mad when she heard this. She ordered Leunard to be stripped of his possessions there and then in the cathedral. She had his clothes torn off his back and she took away his baldric which Chilperic had given to him... Thorpe L., (trans.), *Gregory of Tours the History of the Franks.*, (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 399.

²³² Louis the Pious is reported to have tried to castigate the habits of some men belonging to the clergy to wear golden belts, the term is the “*cingula balteis*”, heavy spurs and exquisite garments: “*...cingula balteis aureis et gemmeis cultris onerata, exquisitaeque vestes et calcari talos onerantia.*”...For it was finally decreed at that time that girdles adorned with golden belts and jewelled daggers be laid aside by bishops and clerics and that fine clothes and spurs on the ankles be abandoned...Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici Pii imperatoris* Tremp, E., (ed.), (MGH) SSRG 44, (Hannover, 1995), c. 28, p. 378, Cabaniss A., (trans.), *Astronomer, Son of Charlemagne; A Contemporary Life of Louis the Pious*, (Syracuse, 1961), p. 64. In this period nevertheless, bishops could fight in wars like the youngest son of Eberhard of Friuli, Rudolf.

office.²³³ The words *balteus*, *cinctorius* and *redimiculus* all together denote the elaborate belt set of Count Gerald of Aurillac, in the *Life of Gerald*, written in the mid-10th century, and not just the *balteus*.²³⁴ A marquis on the other hand, like Adalbert of Ivrea, is described by Liutprand of Cremona around 960 as wearing a very long and wide jewelled *balteum* that has no reference to a sword and would look more like a sash.²³⁵ So, it is mostly, but not only, *balteum* and in a much lesser degree *cingulum* that represents the belts these social categories wear, to designate secular office, which they can bequeath to their heirs. The difference in this period is that sometimes this baldric is worn without a sword and still it is called a *balteum*. We learn in a few instances that they wear both *baltea* and *cingula*, united as the *cingula balteis*.

If the king is the role model in this system and also the distributor of these objects, what is the word for the regal belt in this period? At the end of the 7th century we have explicit if not detailed descriptions of the dress of a biblical king in a poem by Aldhelm, wearing the royal insignia of a “*balteus bullifer*” and a *diadema*.²³⁶ Earlier than that, as we have seen, all known terms are used: a regal belt is a *zona*,²³⁷ or a *cingulum*.²³⁸ In Gregory of Tours, the kings confer *baltea* to his followers, so they own them and can wear them themselves. Later, the emperor Charlemagne is described girded with a *balteum* of gold in ceremonies and festive days, or else of silver, always with a sword, as the role model of his courtiers. Einhard and Notker of Saint Gall comment as to his austere and traditional manner of dress, similar to that of any other Frank; so probably the

²³³ Liutprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, (MGH) SSRG 4, Becker J., (ed.), (Hannover and Leipzig, 1915), 12, I, 23; *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*. Liutprand of Cremona, Scott B., (ed. and trans.), Bristol Classical Press, (London, 1993), p. 50. “...cum ense, balteo, armillis, ceteris pretiosissimi indumentis.” ...As for the count of Bergamo, a man called Ambrose he had him hung before the city gate in his finest clothes, sword, belt and armlets complete...

²³⁴ See Chapter 1, note 6.

²³⁵ Liutprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, (MGH) SSRG 4, Becker J., (ed.), (Hannover and Leipzig, 1915), 12, II, 62, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*. Liutprand of Cremona, Scott B., (ed. and trans.), Bristol Classical Press, (London, 1993), p. 150, “...mirae longitudinis et latitudinis aureum habebat balteum qui multarum et pretiosarum splendebat nitore gemmarum.”...(Gisla’s husband Boson) had a belt of exceptional length and breadth, enriched with a large number of precious gleaming stones...

²³⁶ “*Balteus bullifer et diadema regni ac diversa ornamentorum gloria ...*”, Aldhelm, *De Virginitate*, (MGH) Auct. Antiquiss., 15, 9, 5.

²³⁷ Chilperic’s belt in Fortunatus poem, op.cit., note 210.

²³⁸ Worn by the *regulus* Paulus, the pretender king of Aquitaine, which is vanquished by the Visigothic army of king Wamba around 670, in Julianus Toletanus, op.cit., note 211, p. 520, 25.

Frankish élites dressed like him.²³⁹ Although the *balteum* of the royalty and the officials and élites is so prominent in this period, even when worn without a sword, still, as we saw earlier, in legislation, secular and ecclesiastical, the term for the official's belt and especially the military official's is mostly the *cingulum militiae*.²⁴⁰

In the description of Carolingian royalty and nobility in Nithard,²⁴¹ as much in the dress of Charlemagne in Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, or of Charles the Fat in Hincmar of Rheims,²⁴² it is always a *balteum* which denotes the military aspect of the identity of the emperors and their heirs and entourage.

The *balteum* of the soldiers, symbol of domination and protection, heir of the Late Roman *cingulum militiae*²⁴³ and representative of the military officials and the new warrior élites that are formed in the 9th century, is thus still there. In the narratives it can be a very ornate object, sometimes looking like a girdle as in the case of Marquis Adalbert or worn with a jewelled dagger. This object until now used to be the synonym of the *cingulum militiae* in its literal sense, a baldric. In the late 8th and until the 10th century, however, its use becomes more general; probably there are two conceptionally distinct categories in this period. The *balteum seculare* seems to overlap with the *cingulum* of the official in Gregory of Tours' system. In legislation the kings still use this

²³⁹ See note 127, 128 with the sole exception of Walafridus Strabo, as discussed previously. See note 145. For the dress of Charlemagne in particular, where the *balteum* is part of his everyday attire and also plays central part of ceremonial occasions, Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni imperatoris / The Life of Charlemagne*, Firchow E.S., Zeydel E.H., (ed.-trans.), Bibliotheca Germanica 3, (Dudweiler, 1985), pp. 110-111 and Notkerus Balbulus abbas Sangallensis, *De gesta Caroli Magni Imperatoris, II, (MGH) SSRG* (new series) 12, (ed.), Haefele H.F., (Berlin, 1962), 1, 34, pp. 91-92.

²⁴⁰ See notes 138, 139, 183, 184, 142, 153 with the sole exception of Walafridus Strabo, as discussed previously. See note 145. In the description of Carolingian royalty and nobility in Nithard, the dress of Charlemagne in Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, or of Charles the Fat in Hincmar of Rheims, (see note 242), it is always a *balteum* which denotes the military aspect of the identity of the emperors and their heirs and entourage, whether they embody the values objectified in it or whether they reject aspects of this role-modelling. As we saw on the previous page, there is a discrepancy in the usage of the *balteum seculare* and of the *cingulum militiae*, which probably also represents a contrast in the values these terms embodied.

²⁴¹ See note 229: whether they embody the values objectified in it or whether they reject aspects of this role-modelling. As we saw on the previous page, there is a discrepancy in the usage of the *balteum seculare* and of the *cingulum militiae*, which probably also represents a contrast in the values these terms embodied.

²⁴² Hincmar of Rheims, *The Annals of St-Bertin*, (trans.), Nelson J.L., (Manchester, 1992), p. 182. The Prince, the future Charles the Fat rejects his role in a drastic and stage-managed way, untying his belt and taking off his princely dress of office in the palace court of Frankfurt in 873: he was trying to reject a dual role of military masculinity and of the duty of procreation of noble legitimate heirs as suggested in Nelson J.L., "Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity, c. 900", in Hadley D. (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, (London, 1999), pp. 121-142, esp. p. 134-135. The prince is not rejecting the role of a secular nobleman in its entirety, that would possibly mean that he would show in the same court if he had cut off his hair and worn a sackcloth, which he didn't.

²⁴³ See Van Winter J.M., "Cingulum Militiae," *Revue d'histoire du droit* 44 (1976), pp. 1-92.

latter phrase as both the standard stereotypical phrase for the baldric and its metaphorical sense of military and state office, so that this term might cover both categories of *baltea*. However, the terms used in legislation of the 7th-10th centuries are very conservative: they often remained the same even when they became outmoded. The *cingulum militiae*, encompassing both public functions, apparently differed from the *balteum seculare* in the cases when the armed élite follower was dependent on a lord, or owed military service to the kingdom and his power did not extend to judicial, public and fiscal duties.²⁴⁴ We however cannot usually tell from the legislation or from the few other sources²⁴⁵ whether or not this belt – when the term was used literally – was worn with a baldric and a sword, because we cannot contextualise the information.

We can however, tell materially the difference in other genres of textual evidence, where we know more about the circumstances, and if we have the description of the object or its contexts of use. For example, we know that each of the four sons of Eberhard and Gisela, even though if there was a possibility that Unruoch was their intended heir to the ducal office, inherited *baltea* of gold and gems or gold and ivory, two or three swords and a mail-shirt.²⁴⁶ Two of these sons were abbots, nevertheless we have seen previously that élite clergymen sometimes had vestimentary tendencies towards secular accoutrements like the *cingula balteis* of gold with jewelled knives.²⁴⁷ The last two sons, Adalhard and Rudolf, also get swords and a mail-shirt each, but since by canon law the lines between clergy and milites should be drawn clearly, they probably were not supposed to wear them. The belts of gold, gold and ivory, gold and gems divided between the four brothers cover more than one social category, according to the attributes and the ambitions invested in the peculiar and personal circumstances pertaining to each son. A will like that allows us to contextualize, because the careers of

²⁴⁴ For the right of passage of belting on a sword, the giving of arms to some men of the population when these came of age, See Le Jan R., “Frankish giving of arms and rituals of power”, *Rituals of Power from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, TRW 8, (Brill, 2000), pp. 286-291.

²⁴⁵ As in the royal diploma n° 84 of Charles the Bald in 846: “... Abrenuntians seculo...cingulum militiae deposuit...”, *Diplomata Charles le Chauve*, Tôme III, n° 84, Tessier G., (ed.), (Paris, 1955), p. 210; in the Cartulary of Cluny in 951: “.. Cingulum militiae solvens et comam capitis... detundens...”, *Recueil des chartes de l’abbaye de Cluny*, Tôme I, n° 802, Bernard A., Bruel A., (eds.), CDI, (Paris, 1876), and in the *Vita Radbodi* (a. 976), : “...milites regni militiae cingulo praecincti...”, (MGH) SS 15, Holder-Egger O., (ed.), c. 9, 571, 5.

²⁴⁶ See notes 61, 221, 244.

²⁴⁷ Cf notes 61, op. cit., p. 3-4, 221, 224.

the Unruochings are well documented, and because of the descriptions in the very detailed list of heirlooms.

In the Annals of Saint-Bertin, Charles the Fat rejected his military role by unbelting and undressing ceremoniously, in 873, ten years before he became emperor.²⁴⁸ Probably he wore a sword with this *balteum*, as did Gerald in the *Life of Gerald of Aurillac*; the *balteum*, or the set of *cinctorium*, *balteum* and *redimiculum*, was a composite object in which the two or three functions of the secular, official aristocrat, soldier and potential head of a family coincided. The list of the attributes Count Ambrose in Bergamo wore at his execution included his golden belt, and a sword.²⁴⁹ In these cases the *balteum* is a virtual synonym to the *cingulum militiae* as found in the legislation, and there is not great change in the definition of the lexis of belting or the clothing system between the late Merovingian and Carolingian aristocracy. In the cases of Rodulf, the other son of Eberhard, destined to be a cleric,²⁵⁰ or Marquis Adalbert of Ivrea, their *baltea* could be a badge of nobility and honour, of their associations with a powerful family and with their landed property, of fiscal jurisdiction, and of their status based on their role as administrators, secular or not - and less on military power, even if it can be a part of their identity. The function of this *balteum seculare* when it is possible to make it out, when the information can be personalized, descends from the *cingulum* of the magistrates, the public functionaries of the late empire, the *cinctorium* of the 5th and 6th centuries.²⁵¹

Apart from the *cinctorium*,²⁵² there are no descriptions of ordinary or elite women's belts or girdles in the 8th and 9th centuries. It is not possible to tell if the same lexis persisted, or if the form of female dress changed. The descriptions of women's dress and of women's bodies become even more scarce in this period, just as they start to

²⁴⁸ See Annals of St Bertin, op. cit., note 242, p. 182. This description coincides with the description in Agobard, around 830, *Liber apologeticus pro filiis Ludowici Pii contra patrem*, (MGH) SS 15, Waitz G., (ed.), lib. II, p. 55: "*cingulum militiae deposuit et supra altare collocavit, et habitu saeculi se exuens...*".

²⁴⁹ See Liutprand, op.cit., note 233, p. 50.

²⁵⁰ See notes 61, 221.

²⁵¹ Making just visible a new idiom of clothing at this period that is not always distinct from the military functions of the people of means and connections in late Merovingian and Carolingian societies, unless the textual evidence allows us to see into a particular situation.

²⁵² See note 215, where is used to denote the chain-belt, of Fridiburga, the young afflicted daughter of a duke in the *Life of Gallus*, a text that is rewritten well into the end of the 9th century.

become visible in iconography.²⁵³ There, no belts and no buckles are depicted nor any strap-ends or other hangings; women, if they wear anything around their waist, wear girdles or sashes over dresses with wide sleeves with borders.²⁵⁴ There is little textual evidence for their attire in general with the exception of earlier authors, of the early 7th century, Bede and Aldhelm, who talk about nuns,²⁵⁵ and later on in the middle of the 9th century, in Angilbert and Agnellus, who talk about royalty and secular élite women,²⁵⁶ but none of them informs us on the particulars of their tunics or their belts; the material evidence from the early phases of Barking Abbey, as in all probability Aldhelm is addressing the nuns there, comprises also elegant strap ends, the similars of which were found in Flixborough and Whitby.²⁵⁷ It is possible that these narrow strap-ends were attached to long and narrow tablet-woven braid girdles. Angilbert and Agnellus focus on the jewellery, headwear, embroidered decoration and borders on their dresses and sleeves. The same is attested in all genres of textual evidence, including the Anglo-Saxon wills.²⁵⁸ There is, however, material evidence, that is complementary to the above clothing systems from the 7th and 8th till the 10th centuries, as we saw earlier,²⁵⁹ of womens' clothes and of important changes in fashion, and these prove that the form of the dress changed, but not the structural axis, and that girdles or an accentuation at the waistline as well as the decoration were integral in the clothing systems of women; and

²⁵³ See note 32 both the Genoels-Elderen Diptych and Stuttgart Psalter depictions as in fol. 58r, are of the very end of the 8th century, see figs 3. 17, 3.18.

²⁵⁴ As in the Stuttgart Psalter, fol. 58r, fig 3.18.

²⁵⁵ Bede informs us about the elaborate garments of the nuns of Coldingham in Northumbria, who were weaving and embroidering their garments, adorning themselves like brides in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, see Colgrave B., Mynors R. (eds.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (Oxford, 1969), pp. 424, 426 passim; Aldhelm, op. cit., Chapter 2, note 249, p. 57, where he describes the luxurious dresses and headwear of the nuns of Barking Abbey and contrast all this to the *Regula Sanctorum Virginum* of Caesarius of Arles, op.cit., note 192.

²⁵⁶ Angilbert, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 106, p. 17 with the descriptions of the tunics, mantles, and mostly headwear and jewellery of the females in the family of Charlemagne; Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, (MGH) *Scriptor Langob saec. VI- IX*, Pertz K., (ed.), 378, 15. See Chapter 2, pp. 75-76, the description of the women of the urban élites of Ravenna, their dresses and mostly their headgear and jewellery.

²⁵⁷ See Webster L., Backhouse J., op. cit., Chapter 2, note 254, pp. 53, 88-94; cf ibidem, p. 90 on Whitby finds.

²⁵⁸ In the wills of Wynfæd in Whitelock D., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, (Cambridge, 1930), n° 3, and Æthelgifu in Whitelock D. et alii, *The Will of Æthelgifu*, (London, 1968), the extensive wardrobes that are described do not include a belt or a girdle but references to a number of kirtles, gowns, tunics, of fustian, linen, silk and fine wool, headwear, headbands, mantles.

²⁵⁹ See section 3.2 A few cases studies of extant surviving garments with exceptional cut and emphasis on the waistline, pp. 157-167 in this Chapter.

we get this information despite the cessation of the furnished burials around the middle of the 7th century.

A girdle that is woven in its entirety, worn by a woman of substance, would probably look similar to the one preserved in Chelles which possibly belonged to the Abbess Bertille buried there in 704.²⁶⁰ Although we know that this item would be described as a *zona* in the 6th and 7th century sources, this term is not used to describe women's belts or girdles in the period after that. There is only the case of the Witgar belt, the silk girdle having relic strap ends, given to Bishop Witgar of Augsburg by Queen Emma somewhere between 860 and 887. The red embroidered dedication along the belt's length reveals the name of the donor and describes the gift as a *zona*.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, this is a liturgical belt in all probability and although it was ordered by a Carolingian Queen it was meant to be worn by a bishop- the term *zona* is exactly how these belts were called in the period according to the evidence from Elne.²⁶² In the absence of contrary evidence we can only speculate that the *cingulum* was used in its generic sense mostly in the secular world for both genders in late Merovingian and Carolingian period.

The ecclesiastical *zona* remains as a technical term after the 9th century;²⁶³ it is by now a vestment only to be found in lists of movables of bishops in several places,²⁶⁴ including Ireland, together with the *stola*, which is similar to a clerical belt vestment but worn around the neck over the chest.²⁶⁵

In the *Sacramentarium Gelasianum*, written around 680 in Rome, in the lists of ecclesiastical vestments from patristic texts, donations and wills, the term employed is

²⁶⁰ See Chapter 2, pp. 114-119, notes 215, 218, 221. The widest belt, is a composite piece, consisting of borders of narrower braids. This artefact may be unique, but shows that technique and colour can substitute gold and silver in a different context of display of style or in the case of an ecclesiastical vocation.

²⁶¹ Goldberg E.J., "Regina nitens sanctissima Hemma: Queen Emma (827-876), Bishop Witgar of Augsburg, and the Witgar-Belt", in Weiller B., MacLean S., (eds.), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800-1500*, (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 57-95. The dedication reads as follows: "*Hanc zonam regina nitens sanctissima Hemma Witgario tribuit sacro spiramine plenum*"...The shining and most holy Queen Emma gave this belt to Witgar, a man filled with sacred breath (i.e. the Holy Spirit). (trans. by Goldberg E.J.)

²⁶² See note 164.

²⁶³ See the 8th and 9th century sources in note 164, the embroidered dedication on the belt of Witgar, see note 261.

²⁶⁴ Donation of Riculf, op.cit., note 164

²⁶⁵ *Antiphonarium Benchorensis*, (ed.) Warren B., Migne P., (ed.), PL 72, c. 592, 20.

either *zona* or *cingulum*, in their specific ecclesiastical sense.²⁶⁶ The *balteum* is not usually to be found in ecclesiastical contexts, or as a liturgical vestment, although it appears, very rarely from the 7th century onwards, as the belt of the bishop – for example only once in Bede.²⁶⁷ As we saw earlier,²⁶⁸ in the hagiography of the 8th -10th centuries it is the *cingulum abbatis* or *ecclesiae* that is now used instead. When the *balteum ecclesiae* is found next, it is in Hrabanus Maurus' list of the vestments of the Hebrew priests, "*De singulis vestibus quibus sacerdotes vel reliqui ordines in veteri testamenti utebantur*": here, *balteum*, *zona* and *cingulum* are used all together.²⁶⁹ This may be in reference to the tradition of earlier writers on the biblical vestments and to their continuity in the church, that becomes established in Bede and is attributed to the Vulgate and Jerome.²⁷⁰ Later in this period, for the first time we have explicit information about priests' attire,²⁷¹ which specifies a liturgical belt (*cingulum*), although we cannot argue that it was worn as a sign of the clerical office outside liturgical contexts. A *benedictio cinguli*, the blessing ceremony of the priest's belt, is found in the *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Aecclesiae* compiled in Mainz around 972.²⁷²

The category *cingulum regale* is found again, after the *life of Radegund* of Fortunatus, in the late 7th century in the *Life of Saint Balthild*,²⁷³ and as we saw earlier in

²⁶⁶ *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Aecclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli*, (Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenti Series maior, Fontes 4), p. 241, c. 240, Mohberg L.C., (ed.), (Rome, 1968).

²⁶⁷ See the source in note 197, see also "*Superhumerale strictum erat balteo...*", Bedae *Venerabilis Operum*, Pars II, *De Tabernaculo et Vasis eius ac Vestibus Sacerdotum Libri tres*, pp. 461-491, (c. 729), Migne P., (ed.), PL 91, cap. III-V. *De tunica superhumeralis*.

This is a treatise on the ecclesiastical vestments of the Hebrew priests one by one as they are mentioned in the Bible and it is an effort to historicise and explore the meaning of the priestly vestments of the orders and the priests of the times of Bede.

²⁶⁸ For examples of 8th, 9th, 10th century Saints' lives and their lexis of ecclesiastical belting, see note 153.

²⁶⁹ Hrabanus Maurus, *De Clericorum Institutione*, Migne P., (ed.), PL 101, lib. primus, cap. 39, col. 1242-46, also see Chapter 2, note 50.

²⁷⁰ See note 173.

²⁷¹ Even in this period, we do not have descriptions of what the priests wore, but in two cases in an ecclesiastical council in Ireland, at the Council of Clonishoh, held in 747, priests were advised to wear simple dress and nuns should not spend their time making fine garments, Haddan W., Stubbs W., (eds.), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol 3, (Oxford, 1878), p. 369.

²⁷² This is surviving in a 14th century manuscript in Toulouse: *Benedictio cinguli*: "... *Deus qui nobis per sanctum tui evangelium preconium... tibi valeamus ministrare omnipotente Deo. Qui vivis et regnas.*", Vogel C., Elze R., (eds.) *Le Pontifical romano-germanique du Xe siècle*, (eds.), (Città del Vaticano, 1972), tome II, p. 217.

²⁷³ *Vitae Sanctae Balthildis*, Version B, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, Krusch B. (ed.), 492, 5: "... *sed et ipsum regale, quo cingebatur cingulum, a sacris lumbis abstulit fratribusque in elemosinam ipsum direxit...*", as the queen is portrayed using up all her resources as means to help abbot Laigobert to fund Cobion.

Spain, the *Historia Wambae Regis*.²⁷⁴ The *cingulum* is a broader category, used for women as well, as we have seen, but in this case we have further qualitative information about its social function and symbolism and about its form. It is the stately golden belt of the Queen, recognised as such by the others, and it is wide and rigid, and can be broken to pieces like the golden ingots also found in the same context that the Queen gave to Laigobert of Cobion. It is difficult to visualize this heavy belt of state, since we do not have belts from the period, and very few buckles after the decline of the furnished burials; the buckles that we have in the second half of the 7th century are much less prominent and much smaller,²⁷⁵ - the large plaque-buckles went out of fashion in the middle of the 7th century.²⁷⁶ The clothes of Saint Balthild, preserved at Chelles, do not include a belt like this, but by then, Balthild is not a Queen any more, and according to her anonymous hagiographer, at Chelles,²⁷⁷ she gave this and other belts like this away when she entered the cloister. Her clothes, however, aspire to royal status much more than to sainthood; they are colourful, elaborately woven, silken, well-made, expressing subdued elegance and possibly personal taste. The sacrifice of Balthild's jewels before entering the convent, at the advice of her spiritual advisor Eligius of Noyon then, would contrast with the elegance and fine quality of the half shirt we have mentioned and the rest of the finery, even if clothes like that are held up to light and understood as the apparel of a community of high-status nuns.²⁷⁸ Even if Balthild had never taken full monastic vows, the clothes of Abbess Bertille, the "*domna abbatissa*" proper, are no less

²⁷⁴ *Historia Wambae regis auctore Iuliano episcopo Toletano*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 5, 520, 25: "*Sed mox tyrannus idem erectis oculis faciem principis vidit, statim se humo prostravit sibiue cingulum solvit, iam quidem exanimis et turbatus, quid sibi accideret non attendens*".

²⁷⁵ Compare Stein F., "Pre-Carolingian Graves in South Germany," *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Third Series 31 (1968), pp. 1-18 and Dannheimer H., "Ein spätmerowingischer Eulogenbehälter von Walda," *Germania* XLIV (1966), pp. 338-354 for some examples of late 7th -8th century buckles in Bavaria mostly where the custom of furnished burial persisted for another century.

²⁷⁶ See note 106 for the career of the voluminous buckle-sets and their usual occurrence.

²⁷⁷ The term found there is *cingulum*, a generic term that covers woven belts of men and women, made of leather and/or studs and plates, but here it is substantial, and used in the same paragraph in the context of the "*talenta multi argenti vel auri*" the ingots of precious metals the queen gave both Laigobert of Corbie and Filibert of Jumièges, See *Vitae Sanctae Balthildis*, Version B, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 2, Krusch B., (ed.), pp. 491, 20- 492-10.

²⁷⁸ *Vitae Eligii Episcopi Noviomagensis Liber I*, (MGH), *Scr rer Mer*. 4, p. 724, c.41.

sumptuous.²⁷⁹ There is an object that could be the belt of the striped brown-yellow tunic of Bertille: it is a very long tablet-woven braid with tablet-woven borders made by four different colours and multiple motifs.²⁸⁰ This and the quality of the clothes mark a discrepancy between the written record of monastic clothing in undyed wool, of the principles of simplicity and of that “more is less” and the reality, which should be a warning against literal interpretations of texts. It has been proposed however, that “these women acted in gender-specific ways, as agents of *romanitas*, and as exemplars of rank, deploying their own strategies of distinction” and in addition to that “a royal convent could function as an outpost of courtliness, displaying and inverting the symbolism of Queenly regalia”.²⁸¹ Courtly fashion and *exotica*, the very well-made tablet-woven girdle, the silk, the exquisite embroidery,²⁸² can be easily recognised as statements of a courtly *modus vivendi*. It is interesting, however, if we need to get the whole picture, to add to this the inversion of these symbols of status if we understand the different spatial and functional context in which they were displayed in the convent; there is a possibility that the daily ministry of serving the community, including menial tasks²⁸³ were performed by these women as an ostentatious act of humility and penance perhaps even in clothes like that to mark all the better the contrast between their present and past circumstances they so willingly took upon themselves.

The value of the belt as a cultural construct, in a category like the *cingulum militiae*, is in announcing to a given social milieu the social identity of the élite layman, who is also a warrior.²⁸⁴ It is a composite artefact, and we have seen already in the

²⁷⁹ See *Vitae Sanctae Balthildis*, Version B, (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 2, Krusch B., (ed.), 486,5: She lived as a *peregrina*, first, then in forced exile, 496, 10: she supposedly lived in extreme modesty (perhaps including being dressed in dirty clothes and waiting at others).

²⁸⁰ See fig 2.9b, 2.9c

²⁸¹ Nelson J.L., “Gendering courts in the early medieval west”, in Brubaker L., Smith J.M.H., (eds.), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 185-197, esp. p. 190.

²⁸² Seen probably as a privilege of the nobility, see supra Bitel, op.cit., note 28, p. 128.

²⁸³ As in the primary role-models of female asceticism for the noble women of previous century and popular at the period when Balthild and Bertille were at Chelles, attested in the Life of Radegund, the recluse queen; both before and after her consecration she is most willingly shown to serve others as well as any of her maids, see Fortunatus Venantius, *De Vita S. Radegundis*, (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 2, c. 12, 19, 78, 80, 82, pp. 269-234, and passim 265-369.

²⁸⁴ See for the ritual and also political significance and amuletic properties of the sword and the baldrics as exploited by armed groups of aristocracies and retainers through a wide span of centuries in Bouzy O.,

descriptions of Frankish warriors in Sidonius Apollinaris, in the wills from Ravenna and Pisa, in the *cingula balteis* in Astronomer, in the *Life of Gerald* where it can comprise a baldric, the belt and the belt straps and fittings, and smaller or larger buckles .

There seems to be some correlation between the social context, the nature, purpose and genre of the text, and the social standing of the described person; the letters, poems, the wills, the *formulae* and most of the narratives, historiography and saints' lives describe the clothes and belts of people prominent by birth who are the writers and the recipients: prelates, aristocrats and royalty; very seldom do we get glimpses of the common attendant or soldier. In both cases of holy relics, and of belts worn with weapons or not, these objects had referential significance beyond the moment they were used, and their written descriptions manipulated the value systems of these groups of people to the advantage of those who composed them.²⁸⁵ A little space is left there for very prominent women.

These are the most detailed accounts of the form, material, colour and number of items in the dress system, the more elaborate type of belting of the females of royal blood and of the high aristocracy. But from these genres specific to the social groups mentioned above we are informed as to lexical changes, and these point up the changes in belts and subsequently the changes in the clothing systems. Examples of that are the oppositions and the changes in the word *bracile* across different genres and secular and ecclesiastical contexts, showing change and difference between the clothing systems of monks, abbots and secular people over the span of three centuries.²⁸⁶ In the saints' lives and the sermons, some common people are described too - perhaps because this genre addresses them as well - here the lexis of clothes and belts is not detailed, but it is set within a contextual framework and this makes possible a degree of interpretation of the motives behind manners of clothing of early medieval people. There is a change in the definitions of the words signifying belts in hagiography, denoting change in dress of

"Les armes symboles d'un pouvoir politique: l' épée du sacre, la sainte lance, l' oriflamme aux VIIIe-XIIe siècles," *Francia* 22 (1995), pp. 45-48.

²⁸⁵ Effros B., *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World*, (Pennsylvania, University Park, 2002), pp. 14-15.

²⁸⁶ See the discussion on the use and definition of the *bracile* in monastic Rules, pp. 186-190, when inscribed in the categories within a text studying the philosophie of language like Isidorus's, in a number of Saints' lives, in two wills from Ravenna and Pisa. The term changes and the change shows as it traverses different genres, contexts and vestimentary systems.

diverse social groups. Belts, *cingula* and ropes, *funicula*, are represented in the descriptions to convey charismatic powers in an amuletic way and work in the manner of relics as the tangible element of the connection between this world and the hereafter. This is further intensified and made clear when the monastic and ecclesiastical belts are linked to clothing such as the hairshirts, the *cilicium*, worn in long or short term acts of penance, by hermits, pilgrims and on deathbed rituals. The sartorial display of penance aimed first and foremost to be the visually apprehensible mortification of all aspects of a person's social identity, the crumbling down of the personality of a person in front of the Divinity and also of other people, all in all it was demarcating a group of marginal people, in the early Christian period and the first period of monasticism. Of the examples we have from hagiographical texts about the use of belts and hairshirts, most were composed of bishops and literate members of the monastic community or referred to members of privileged groups as in the case of Gertrude of Nivelles. This fact exemplifies how people having a certain social standing and connections manipulated a value system and introduced and popularised of new practices and meanings invested in clothing.²⁸⁷ In practice, in saint's lives, the ropes and hairshirts were brought out of the margins of society to the centre of attention for lay persons as well, prominent or not. These acts were of course intended to contribute to subjective recollections of the holy man or woman as the references to garments in hagiographical texts did not present an unmodified reflection of the saint.²⁸⁸

On the contrary, in legislation, the terms are conservative, generalising and non descriptive, although we know that the belts referred to in these involve the social category who owned land and had the obligation to bear arms. From the theological treatises, the ecclesiastical councils and legislation, the exegetical texts and homilies, and the saints' lives again, it is possible to draw fairly detailed information about the dress of most registers of the clergy, with the exception of the common priest and the nun, and also follow changes in terminology, and more visible oppositions between terms than in the other genres.

²⁸⁷ Kopytoff I., "The cultural biography of things: commodization as process", in Appadurai A., *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*, (Cambridge, 1986), esp. pp. 82-83.

²⁸⁸ Effros B., *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World*, (University Park, 2002), pp. 24.

The lexis of belting was not static over the centuries, and I have tried to assess its consistency and variation in the different textual and intertextual contexts over time, in the course of the 5th to the 10th centuries. New meanings and values emerged from the multiplicity of terms before the 7th century and later, but these became fewer and probably more standardised.

In the presentation of the linguistic and semantic developments of a single but crucial word – crucial to any vestimentary system - through the course of the 5th to the 10th centuries, it is possible to witness the times of late Roman bureaucracy, the warrior newcomers, Merovingian court culture, the beginnings of monasticism and the organised Church and their classical and biblical roots, the militarisation of the top registers of society, the multiple functions of a hereditary Carolingian aristocracy and, perhaps most vividly, the linguistic processes at work in the multiple usages of the terms of early medieval Latin over diverse regions. These terms, defining belts and girdles, may never have been fixed. If the relationship of all these terms to their contemporaries, signified by their girdles and belts, seem to cross over semantic fields more than ever, if these are overlapping and changing, it seems this is so is because the early middle ages were just in their making.

3. 5 Historical sources: Was there ever a standardisation of values and an objectification of these values in belts and girdles? The examination of artefacts from testaments.

In the stylistic messaging system, symbolic and functional values are communicated through the choice of style, material, form and function, always taking as a point of reference the attitudes of the broader social matrix. In this study, the stylistic messages that are communicated in these choices and the questions pertaining to the interactions of social groups to these choices, are seen as deliberate and detectable up to a certain degree, at least in the sources that allow us glimpses of the world of the

individual, the personalised and specific information in wills,²⁸⁹ donations and some narratives. Wills and donations will be examined now in their regional, cultural, political and economical context. The notion that cultural values were objectified in a belt and that they were inherent in its shape, materials and functions will be tested here again. Alongside that, the possibility of detecting a standardization of values at different periods, or else of change and renegotiation, will also be tested on the basis of the empirical evidence of a few wills that list belts among other movables. A visualisation of these artefacts will also be examined in an effort to find their place in the clothing systems they belonged to the time the will was contracted. There is some implicit and incomplete information on these systems in the documents, but some points will be supplemented from what we know on the basis of lexical development over our time span, as presented above.

The examination of the values expressed in the belts and of how these belts fitted within a clothing system will take a dual course: first, a number of particular questions will be asked on the basis of the wills and donations and a few narratives in reference to the lexis, and when possible, to archaeological parallels. In the subsequent section, I will examine what it is possible to know about the real belts found as relics or in mortuary archaeology, and about how they fitted into clothing systems.

Our questions, as previously, concern issues of status and property in inheritance and the social roles related to status, age, occupation and gender. The diverse genres of

²⁸⁹ On wills, their structure, specific terms, function, development over the Merovingian and Carolingian periods see, Kasten B., (ed.), *Herrscher-und Fürstentestamente im westeuropäischen Mittelalter*, (Köln, 2008), especially Semmler J., “Zum Testament des gallofränkischen Bischofs”, in Kasten B., (ed.), *Herrscher-und Fürstentestamente im westeuropäischen Mittelalter*, (Köln, 2008), pp. 573-597, also Bertram M., “Mittelalterliche Testamente. Zur Entdeckung einer Quellengattung in Italien,” *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 68 (1988), pp. 509-544. For a collection and analysis of early Merovingian testaments, see general works such as Levison W., “Das Testament des Diakens Adalgisel Grimo (634),” *Treirer Zeitschrift* 7 (1932), pp. 69-85 and on the usual problems in their interpretation and criteria and problematization over their authenticity see Atsma H., Vezin J., “Deux Testaments sur papyrus de l’ époque Mérovingienne: Étude Paleographique”, in *Haut Moyen Âge. Culture, Éducation et Société. Études offertes à Pierre Riché*, Paris, (Nanterre, 1990), pp. 159-169.

the source material as a whole are, of course, is biased towards certain social groups and ranks, and the male gender, and this also applies to the wills under examination. Of the few extant wills most were composed by bishops, and this is reasonable as this group was closer than any other to centres of learning where these documents could be drawn up and the properties relevant and vital to the institutions where these wills were recorded could be all the better preserved.²⁹⁰ We cannot always be sure about the ethnic or regional identity or law of testators and beneficiaries in the wills, or of their motives behind the detailed or not descriptions of personal items in their wills but we do have information about the provenance and location of the testators.

More detailed questions are these: who owned certain types of belt and who was supposed to wear them? who were the people who inherited these items? are there any women among them or among the testators, and are the belts in question appropriate for them to wear? what is the lexis of the belts in wills? What types of belts do we find in wills and how do they show up in the text among the other items? are they prominent and valuable? how do they fit in a wider vestimentary system hinted at or listed in a will, and is this in accordance with any law or formulaic tradition? can wills inform us about particular textiles inside and outside the context of the text, about or the way a textile was worn and in a way that would tell us about particular social functions?

From what we know about the social categories who appeared in these documents and used and passed down belts to the next generation, according to the previous lexicographical enquiry, it is worthwhile to ask if these clothing attributes were invested with an appointed social role, and if this was specified, as something rigid or something multidimensional.

With the exception of the Ravenna fragment of a will dated in 564,²⁹¹ there are only very few wills before 700, which bequeath secular personal adornments; this reflected the fact that rarely clothes in general are mentioned in great detail sometimes

²⁹⁰ Effros B., *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World*, (University Park, 2002), esp. section on Garments, Weapons and Valuables in Wills and Legislation, pp. 24-32.

²⁹¹ See note 64.

in the Merovingian wills, or a ring (Erminetrudis),²⁹² or often ecclesiastical vestments (Remigius of Rheims),²⁹³ but above all non-movables – as in the testaments of Burgundofara²⁹⁴ and Aredius of Limoges.²⁹⁵ The usual formula of the most personal possessions passed down to others is “*libros et vestimenta ecclesiae*” with no analytical information, well into the 8th century.²⁹⁶ So, in the cases of both secular and ecclesiastical élites, belts, baldrics (in the diversity of their linguistic form of the 5th -7th centuries, the *cingula seculare et militiae*, the *baltea ecclesiae*, the *zoniae*) or girdles, are a very personal possession in late Antiquity and the early medieval period. By the 8th century, though, in Italy at least, we have evidence that people will belts; the 797 Pisa will shows that these were passed down together with golden coins, silver spoons, silver vessels, jewellery and clothes of linen or silk.²⁹⁷

In Francia, too, the formulary of St Gall, dated probably to the late 8th century,²⁹⁸ shows that *baltea* were indeed bequeathed from father to son in this period, along with gold coins, non-movables and horses; but we do not see any evidence earlier than that. It is quite possible that some people who owned valuable dress items and belts chose not to will them before the 8th century; rather, they put them in the ground, as they are the most personal possession of the deceased, especially when they were childless, like the woman in Metz in 585 described in Gregory of Tours.²⁹⁹ She was a relative of the count Guntram Boso and was buried with “much gold and a profusion of ornaments”. Her relative sent his retainers to rob the grave, and this, being a very grave offense, received the punishment which brought about the downfall of the count. Archaeology shows that the general social norms of the period between the middle of the 5th to the beginning of the

²⁹² *Testamentum Erminetrudis*, ChLA XIII, Bruckner A., Marichal R., (gen. eds.), n° 592, (Paris, Archives Nationales K4, n° 1), (a. 600).

²⁹³ *Testamentum Remigii*, Pardessus J.M., *Diplomata, chartae, epistolae, leges et alia*, t. 1, (Paris, 1843), XV, CXVIII, pp. 86-89, (a. 533), see also Atsma H., Vezin J., “Deux Testaments sur papyrus de l’ époque Mérovingienne: Étude Paleographique”, in *Haut Moyen Âge. Culture, Éducation et Société. Études offertes à Pierre Riché*, Paris, (Nanterre, 1990), pp.159-169.

²⁹⁴ Guerout J., “Le Testament de Sainte Fare: matériaux pour l’ étude et l’ édition critique de ce document,” *Revue d’ Histoire ecclésiastique* 60 (1965), pp. 761-821, esp. pp. 817-820.

²⁹⁵ *Testamentum Aredii Abbatis Attanensis et Pelagiae matris eius.*, Pardessus J.M., *Diplomata, chartae, epistolae, leges et alia* ; t. 1, (Paris, 1843) 1, XV, CLXXX, pp.136-137, (a. 572).

²⁹⁶ *Testamentum Wideradi Abbatis*, Pardessus J.M., *Diplomata, chartae, epistolae, leges et alia*, t. 2 (Paris, 1849), DXIV, p. 323, (a.721), reviewed in Bouchard C.B, *The Cartulary of Flavigny (717-1113)*, (Cambridge, MA, 1991), pp. 57-58.

²⁹⁷ See notes 64 for the Ravenna protocol and note 63, for the Pisa will.

²⁹⁸ See note 223.

²⁹⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum X Libri*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* I. VIII. 21.

8th century in some places, dictated that the best, or most personal and characteristic ornaments and dress should be buried with their owner, at least in some regions like Austrasia, where Gregory's story took place, most of Neustria, and parts of Burgundy, and though most sporadically in Aquitaine and the South-west. This fits with the fact that people did not will belts and personal parts of their costume. It is true that general terms, such as *vestimenta* and *fibula aurea gemmata*, are current in wills like the one of Erminetrudis, and later, in the 7th and 8th century donations and bequests to abbeys that have survived, but the phrases are generic, and we cannot tell if the *fibulae* refer to brooches or buckles.³⁰⁰

In the 9th century, by contrast, in the wills of Eberhard and Gisela and of Eccard of Autun,³⁰¹ *baltea* are passed down, especially and carefully chosen, to show the investment of the office on the heirs, as part of family strategies, or in case of childless Eccard to his widow. The testaments or donations *post obitum* that are the most recurrent, across the entire time span of this study, are the documents of important people, particularly men and women of the church, like the testament of abbot Fulrad of Saint-Denis in Herstal in 787,³⁰² the series of donations of the abbess Emhilde to her convent of Milz, in 777-8,³⁰³ bequeathing full lists of church vestments and specified quantities of linen and woolen clothing, or the donation of bishop Riculf in 915 to the church of Elne, in Languedoc, including his five very ornamented *zonae*.³⁰⁴

The Anglo-Saxon wills of the 9th-11th century do not often refer to *gyrdel* and *belt*³⁰⁵ unless these items are treated collectively, as in the "one woman's outfit" that

³⁰⁰ See among many others for *vestimenta* the "Précepte de Charlemagne" to the abbey of Saint-Denis, *ChLA* XVI, n° 618, (Paris, Archives Nationales, K 6, n° 6), (a.776), the "*linina vestita ad unum anum, et lana vestita ad annos duos*" in the donation of Heriker to the church of St Peter in Rangendingen, *ChLA* XVI, n° 131, (St. Gallen, Stiftsarchiv I 120), (a. 795).

³⁰¹ See notes 61, 221 for the Cysoing document of Eberhard and Gisella and 224 for the document of Eccard of Autun.

³⁰² *Testament de l'abbé de Saint-Denis, Fulrad*, *ChLA* XVI, n° 622, (Paris, Archives Nationales, K 7, n° 1), (a.777).

³⁰³ Donations and testament of Abbess Emhilde, n° 154, (Cod. Eberh. II f. 91 Cartular-Ausz) and n° 264, (Cod. Eberh. II f. 59 Cartular-Ausz), in Stengel E.E., *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, I, (Marburg, 1958), pp. 227-231 and 372-379.

³⁰⁴ Donation of Riculf, bishop of Elne to his church, 9 December 915, (Cartulaire de l'église d'Elne, f° 102, v.4), Devic C., Vaissète J., *Preuves de l'Histoire Générale de Languedoc*, Tôme IV, p. 136.

³⁰⁵ Whitelock D., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, (Cambridge, 1930), p. 64 for Wulfwaru's will; p. 14 for Wynflæd's will. In the rest of the 14 wills referring to objects there is reference to transfers, returns to the lord (heriot), or disposal of weapons, and there is only one which refers explicitly to a golden belt, the will of Athelstan, the Ætheling, see Whitelock D. et alii, *The Will of Æthelgifu*, (London, 1968), the extensive wardrobes that

appears in the will of Wulfwaru.³⁰⁶ There, the dresses and their accessories are not described in detail, perhaps because these should be conceived as a costume with perhaps matching details.³⁰⁷ This “one woman’s outfit” goes to her eldest daughter, and is probably the best clothes the testatrix possesses, while all the rest of the female clothing is bequeathed to her younger daughter. In the other wills referring to dress, as in Wynflæd’s will, perhaps written in 950,³⁰⁸ on the contrary, the dresses come with details; there is a badgers’ skin double gown, and another of linen, and these are bequeathed to the first daughter, while her best brownish tunic and the best of her cloaks go to the younger daughter. It is possible that these *post obitum* gifts in Wynflæd’s will are described individually because they are not a matching set, and probably include a belt, and they are not a part of a costume made especially for an occasion, but different pieces of outfits combined together. No belt is willed or even mentioned there; perhaps it belonged to the matching set and was considered as a part of the trimmings in the first case, or else, as the depictions in the art and the texts of the 10th century suggest,³⁰⁹ a belt was not necessary, as the waistline was an inherent part of the cut of the gown.³¹⁰ Belts are nonetheless mentioned at times in Anglo-Saxon England in cures or miracles, as we saw earlier.³¹¹ As to men’s belts, although in 14 out of a corpus of 39 wills published by Whitelock³¹² there is reference to transfers of movables, gifts to the lord (heriot) or disposal of weapons, there is only one which refers explicitly to a golden belt, in the will of the Ætheling Æthelstan, son of Æthelred, dated between 1013 and 1015. The golden belt, with a sword etc, of Æthelstan is a very exceptional item and fits into the category of regal gifts of significance to retainers; perhaps because of this, it is mentioned in the will.

The lexis pertaining to belts in wills is mostly the *balteum* or the *bracile*, or the *zona*. Given what has been discussed so far, the *balteum* is probably a baldric, a man’s

are described do not include a belt or a girdle but references to a number of kirtles, gowns, tunics, of fustian, linen, silk and fine wool, headwear, headbands, mantles.

³⁰⁶ See Chapter 2, p. 128, note 268, the will of Wulfwaru who passed down a band worth of twenty mancuses (Whitelock, op.cit., p. 64, 20-21).

³⁰⁷ See Owen- Crocker G., *Dress in Anglo- Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 228.

³⁰⁸ Whitelock D., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, (Cambridge, 1930), p. 14.

³⁰⁹ See Chapter 2, note 32, and discussion pp. 155-156.

³¹⁰ See section 3.2 of this Chapter, discussion pp. 153-157.

³¹¹ Bede, *Life of St Cuthbert*, in *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, Colgrave B., (ed.- trans.), (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 230-234, see note 197.

³¹² Whitelock D., *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, (Cambridge, 1930), See note 286.

belt, as it is never attested as worn by a woman in the sources: the *bracile* could be a leather belt and not something looking like a girdle because it was worn with a buckle according to both the wills that mention it.³¹³ This belt, in one case was worn with a buckle and a counter-buckle (*subfibula*).³¹⁴ From the testimony of the wills, it seems that *balteum* and probably *bracile* are the most popular terms, at least for men's belts.

It is difficult to imagine that these objects were all worn by the beneficiaries. In St Gall formula, the belt-wearing seems to be inherited, as also was the case for the son of Eberhard and Gisela, where the exhibition of the heirloom was probably an obligation or privilege. Eccard though, having no heir, bequeaths his belt to the surviving widow, as a honorary or personal keepsake perhaps. In all these cases the belt is a *balteum*. The bishops's *zona* had a less personal character; it would probably be listed in the church inventory, hoarded in the treasury of the church, and finally worn by the next bishop. In the Pisa document, though, the two belts are not family heirlooms. The word chosen to describe the belts, and their role in the texts, shows that they are depersonalised and are not to be worn but rather seen as valuables, for their sale value. They also become disengaged from the men who as far as the sources show, seem to be using them exclusively. They are given to women which means women can inherit them and sell them; it is not possible to know if the same types of belt were worn at the end of the 8th century by both genders, so it is impossible to know if they could wear them too in reality.

In the Pisa document, we only have a short list of movables, "*unu baltio cum banda et fibula de argento inaurato, et bracile,*" then the text breaks off to include at the end silver spoons and spurs of silver. The objects are variable, they probably are listed for their sale value, they are not simple family heirlooms but bequests, and were not necessarily worn by the beneficiaries, who are women. The belts also are distinct; the buckle set is of gilded silver and it is worn with the *balteum*; the *bracile*, the belt-strap, is a different object. From what we know about it, a *bracile* could also be adorned, it could also be a general term, like the *cingulum*, and even look like a girdle, as in the description

³¹³ The Pisa and the Ravenna documents refer to a *bracile*.

³¹⁴ See notes 102, 146.

in the *Life of Eligius*.³¹⁵ Nevertheless, in the sources, *bracile* is worn by men, although here it is in the context of jewellery, and probably was a very ornate and expensive belt.

The 564 Ravenna will has a more personal character, as it is the case with the Carolingian wills that we have, but the situation is much more complex: Gratianus is one of three beneficiaries in a text which lists the partition into three parts of the movables and non-movables and the dependents of a property; the objects belong to Gratianus, to Stefanus, who is a minor - Gratianus acts as his advocate - and to Germana, a widow, sister of Stefanus. The list is very long and descriptive and the “*fibula de bracile*”, the waist belt buckle, is enumerated among measures of silver, gold coins, silver vessels and spoons, and embroidered, knitted, dyed and double-dyed garments in purple, red, green and violet; the price of each one of the items is evaluated with precision.³¹⁶ The buckle of the *bracile* is found within a context of expensive and probably very well-made clothes that can give us hints about a vestimentary system worn in Ravenna at the time of the document. The same is possible from the information we have from the will of Eberhard and Gisela, because we have the descriptions of the full ceremonial outfit of the duke given to the first son, and elements of this system are given to the other sons (see above, pp. 68, 74). The five *zonae* in the will of the bishop of Elne, similarly, are inscribed within a system of liturgical vestments which show great affluence and also that imported vestments could be afforded at the time.³¹⁷ They are made of gold and one of them has gold and precious gems.

In the wills that mention belts, the belt word is each time found among the first items enumerated, as also in the formula. In the will of Eberhard and Gisela the belts are the first clothing accoutrement to be described, second only after the weapons, and they

³¹⁵ See supra note 116.

³¹⁶ “...stragula polimita, duo valentes solido uno tremisse uno, scamnile acopicto valente solido uno, plicton vetere siliquas quattuor aureas, camisia tramoserica in cocco et prasino valente solidos tres semis, sarica prasina ornata valente solido uno et tremisse uno, arca clave clausa / valente siliquas duas, sareca misticia cum manicis curtas valente siliquas aureas duas, bracas lineas valentes siliqua aurea una, ...”, p. 8, *Protocol of Gratianus*, Ravenna Municipal Acts, (a. 564), Tjäder J.O., *Die Nichtliterarischen Lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445-700*, (Lund, 1954), 19 /1 pp. 242-246.

³¹⁷ “... id est cruces duas aureas cum gemmis preciosis,...incensarios II, candelabros cum argento quatuor... serindos paria I ad vestimenta sacra salvandum, pectenemque eburneam, I, tabulas eburneas II, caligas & sandalia paria III, amictos cum auro IIII, albas V, tres clicias, & planas II, unum purpureum cum auro, & alium pallium greco, & alios duos in Grecia factos, zonas V, una cum auro et gemmis preciosis, et alias quatuor cum auro, stolas III cum auro, una ex illis cum tintinnabulis, & manipulos V ...”.

precede the spurs, the mantle and tunic and all the rest; this order is exactly the same for all four sons. In the Elne document, the *zonas* follow the two *planetas*, and are second in order. In the Italian documents, and in Eccard's and Æthelstan's will, again the belt has a very prominent place; it is a very characteristic part of the clothing systems of Carolingian aristocracy, lay and ecclesiastical. When we have a lot of information on the vestimentary system of the male élites, as with the clothing found in the Ravenna document, we can even attempt a reconstruction because the presence of the buckle of a belt can help to articulate it. Only the buckle of the *bracile* and not the belt in itself is mentioned here, perhaps because, contrary to the Pisa example and the others, the belt could be a simple leather strap that could be riveted on the buckle, and had a functional and not an aesthetic value. The clothes include *usubandilos* (hosebands), a hose kept in place with bands, shirts of linen and silk (*tramoserica*) woven with a silk weft on a linen warp in red and green colour, linen breeches worn over the hosebands and under the shirts, tunics, one *sarica*, of silk, green here, one with short sleeves of mixed weave (*misticia*) of wool weft on linen warp, probably this one worn on top of the other, with ornate *clavi*³¹⁸ and a leather belt with an ornate buckle. There are also some knitted tunics of wool, as an alternative to the linen or silk tunics. These were clothes for a person, or two changes of the same attire, worn in combinations for all seasons. It is interesting that not only the clothes worn externally, but also the tunics (which were probably not very long), were coloured and decorated and made of strong but still precious material. The shirts, too, are of good materials, so the display here took on the character of personal luxury and comfort. The colours match aesthetically well; they are mostly green, red and white and the tapestry of the *clavi* in the most formal of the tunics must have been in the same colours.³¹⁹ The shape of this system is emphasised by the belt which makes the garments functional as well, as they can be worn shorter or longer according to the circumstances. This forms the main axis of a garment system, perhaps followed by the *clavi* of the external tunic. For the first time we hear about knitwork, not attested in the North, and it is on a grand scale, and the knitted tunics, less formal perhaps, were worn in

³¹⁸ Tablet-woven bands or in the case of Ravenna probably weft-faced tapestry woven decorative borders, sewn onto the collar, the sleeves, usually two at the front placed vertically on the chest, and reaching down the hem of a tunic.

³¹⁹ See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures for the tapestry technique definition.

winter. The whole vestimentary system of an urban well-to-do man emerges in the late 6th century, not drastically different from that of the late Roman dress of the late 3rd or 4th centuries or Byzantine dress of the same period. It may be so because formal and informal male dress, as described here, was quite conservative, or influenced by the Byzantines in Ravenna. This reconstruction also shows that apart from the ostentatious belt-fittings, which would make a strong impact, and probably the knife and a pouch, elements not present here, the only difference in the overall shape of the dress of a man in Northern Italy and in Southampton, or Soissons, would be the silk in his clothes and the *clavi* of the Coptic-style tunic. The shape and the axis would remain the same in conservative dress systems such as this.

The belts in the wills are words, but also the remnants of real objects which were passed down from one generation to the next; they marked the “rite of passage” and the coming of age for the beneficiaries in some cases, and also prepared for the proper and socially acceptable passing of the testators into the next world, in the case of the donations to the church. The words meaning “a belt” in the wills testify to the use of the word in different periods in the time span of this study, but if we set what we know about these words in our lexicographical enquiry against the empirical material examined above, it is possible to say that for these specific social categories who wore these belts, the terms are quite homogeneous. In comparison to the diversity in the terms in the textual record laid out previously, it seems probable that élites, in cities at least, could use the term *balteum* for the stately belt, a piece of jewellery on its own, and their baldrics; and probably *bracile* was popular, or found in use more widely than the other textual sources have shown so far. It is possible that it was a new form, and that, as mentioned in the *Life of Germanus*,³²⁰ it was the belt-strap in the vulgar tongue.

The real belts in the wills were attributes of wealth, an investment of capital and status, for men and for women as in the wills from Ravenna and Pisa, even if women did not wear some of the belt types. The evidence we have cannot attest to more than that. They marked out secular and ecclesiastical rank, and some forms like the baldric, in particular in the 9th century, were used in a more militarised tone. In the St Gall formula

³²⁰ See text on p. 186, note 125, and comparison with the other words in the system within their contexts, and conclusions pp. 186-190.

it is possible to see that by the early 8th century inheritance was a very important element in the concepts of property and family. There, a symbolic role for the *balteum* can be found as well. The baldrics of gold, silver and gold and ivory, in the wills of Eccard, Æthelstan and most of all in the will of Eberhard and Gisela, are part of the context of offensive weapons - and are listed after the sword and dagger, and before the defensive ones: mail-shirt, armguards and greaves - as well as before the gold spurs, the ducal mantle and the golden tunics. The consistent hierarchy in the hoard of words here, at least as far as it concerned the information for the male members of the family, argues for the multidimensional role of these objects, as symbols of status and as assets in themselves.

C. Problems and challenges of the archaeological material.

3. 6 A note on archaeological method in reference to burial archaeology and dress accessories: metalwork and textile finds.

The lexis of belts and girdles on a time-line, even when analysed within the framework of a vestimentary system, offers contextualised but still limited information on the materials of belts, clothes and dress. The types, the decoration, and the visual effect are sometimes hinted at by the authors, but the great complexity in the vestimentary expressions of the final product in the texts is not matched by the quality of the information we get about the materials used or about their construction. When found in the texts it is on occasions which are very specific, not explicit, and restricted to snapshots of costly objects that play their role in the self-view and aspirations of prominent social groups.

We have seen belts and clothes as heirlooms and gifts in various rituals of display or transfers of property; these are some known ways in which these objects prolong their

social lives into the next generations. What we have not seen is what these objects were in reality. The tangible information will be put forward here in a way that makes us move closer to who the people - dressed in life and accompanied in death by cloth, leather and metal - really were. The nature of the evidence imposes temporal limits, as most is drawn from the period of the furnished burials in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England between the late 5th to the beginning of the 8th centuries.³²¹ Some further comparative evidence will be added from Alamannic and Bavarian areas within Frankish influence, where the furnished burial rite persisted for longer than half a century after its cessation in Francia proper during the late Merovingian period.

This survey of the archaeology of belts and of the cloth adhering to them derives from what has become possible to know at present about the urban and rural cemeteries in regions with distinct vestimentary features in different periods between late Antiquity and the late Merovingian or middle Anglo-Saxon period.³²² The dress accessories and the textiles adhering to them were found in the contexts of inhumation burials and could be

³²¹ Some archaeological material from the period of the furnished burial in other areas and political formations of Europe that was nevertheless within the cultural and at times the political influence of Francia has been used here so as to provide us with the comparanda when this was needed. These include Frisian, Alamannic and Bavarian cemeteries of the late 8th century. Some material from Lombard and Visigothic burials was essential to this study as the preservation of textiles, belts and other features was exceptional and offered opportunities for further comparative analysis.

³²² See the collective studies on the subject of belt-buckles and the gendering of Anglo-Saxon grave-goods Marzinzik S., *Early Anglo-Saxon Belt Buckles (late 5th to the early 8th centuries AD): their Classification and Context*, BAR Brit. Ser. 357, (Oxford, 2003) and Stoodley N., *The Spindle and the Spear: A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite.*, BAR Brit. Ser. 288, (Oxford, 1999) and a number of monographs and reports and publications of Frankish sites that form the basis of this part of my synthesis. Conversely there are different criteria and methodologies applied to the archaeology of cloth and vestimentary accessories in an area limited to specialists but most of the times the problems that were encountered were problems of interpretation and of lack of a consistent basis for comparison between the data and the conclusions. Some of the areas have been studied systematically (for Anglo-Saxon England, See Owen-Crocker G., *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge, 2003), and the data base of the Anglo-Saxon textiles in the Manchester Ancient Textiles Unit at Manchester University/UMIST, also Walton-Rogers P., *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England*, (York, 2007) and the data base of Anglo-Saxon textiles and sites based on E. G., Crowfoots' work, accessible via the ADS website (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/resources.html?clothing_eh_2007). The Frankish archaeological textile material has received a different treatment, there is the survey of European textiles of Bender-Jørgensen L., *North European Textiles until AD 1000*, (Aarhus, 1992), which is the only synthetic work that includes Francia with an emphasis on the Germanic, East Frankish material, on which see Bolbuck I., *Studien zu merowingerzeitlichen Textilien*, PhD dissertation, (University of Hamburg, 1987). Some of the Frankish recent archaeological textile material known to this day can be found in the publications of the Centre International d' Étude des Textiles Anciens, (CIETA), and the North European Studies in Archaeological Textiles (NESAT) Symposiums and Monographs and scattered in regional studies and general archaeological textile journals which deploy various methodologies, mostly different criteria of textile qualitative analysis and terminology.

worn and sometimes used for their symbolic values as amulets and reliquaries. These last functions of the belts are among the things the texts do not tell us much about and belong to a category of facts obscured in the written sources; in this category belong also the constructional details of the belts, their form or the weave types, and the varieties of the artefacts that were in and out of fashion in certain regions.

It is important to establish all the varieties of the material forms of belts and girdles if we want to address what the belts, girdles and baldrics of the early middle ages really looked like, the ways these were worn and by whom, especially if the belts will provide us with comparanda over different regions. Belts, girdles and baldrics are products of weavers, dyers, embroiders, tanners, smiths and goldsmiths. Techniques such as tablet-weaving, cording and braiding, spin-patterning, tapestry and pattern weaving, the teaseling and the raising of the nap of a fabric, and embroidery, are visible in the finds from burials, as are also the tinting of leather, the embossing and engraving of iron and bronze, of precious metals and non-ferrous alloys, the tinning and gilding of bronze and silver, the damascening of iron with niello or silver inlays, the repoussé, glass enamelling and cloisonné techniques; moreover, these are evidenced more often in some areas than in others for certain periods, and by certain categories of people, and this can be used as a basis for comparative analysis.

Some of the things we also never hear about in the texts are the chatelaines, the strap-ends, the girdle hangers, the ivory ring bags with toiletries and amulets, or the embroidery and the weave types, for example the fine wool “veil weave” girdles³²³ as well as the cases of fully furnished deviant burials. These would never have been known to research if they did not surface in the mortuary record.

Conversely, the fact that we lack visual representations of the dress forms held by these belts between the 5th to the late 7th centuries and also that the texts are not explicit about the form, shape and decoration of Frankish garments, has led most scholars

³²³ This type of an open net-like finely spun wool weave is better known by the term *Schleiergeweber*, used in veils and girdles that are fine and semi-transparent; there are five examples from 6th century North Yorkshire, (Scorton, and also in West Heslerton in the 7th century), a girdle from 7th century Dover Buckland II, female Grave 353, Kent, see Walton-Rogers, op. cit., Chapter 2, p. 99, notes 132, 133, also from Hessens and Leens in Germany and also in Viking Age Dublin, see Tidow C., “Textiltechnische Untersuchungen an Wollgewebefunden aus friesischen Wurtensiedlungen von der Mitte des 7. bis 13. Jhs. und vergleiche mit Grab und Siedlungsfunden aus dem nördlichen Europa,” *Probleme der Küstenforschung im südlichen Nordseegebiet* 23 (1995), pp. 353-387, especially p. 367, see ibidem fig 32.

to accept that we do not know the shape and form of the garments in Francia in this period.³²⁴ At the same time, while the sources are equally silent about the form of dress in Anglo-Saxon England, we have more information about the shape of garment in Anglo-Saxon regional contexts in the same period, because of more favourable environmental conditions, the extensive use of metalwork in some areas³²⁵ which preserved more textile remains than in Francia, and more consistent and systematic methods of enquiry. In reality, however, we do have in Francia quite a lot of scattered data about archaeological textiles that give us glimpses of a great variety between Frankish regions and of periodic fashions; but these are only partially understood because they have been analysed by different methodologies in studies of diverse aims and unequal quality.

Here, the archaeology of belts will be used complementarily to what we already know about the meaning invested in them from the written sources. The study of the finds can add the functional aspects of dress and a more pluralistic view of clothing and its structural axis; this will test what we already know from the surviving garments. At the same time, as we saw previously, the lexis and the textual descriptions can sometimes add a personal dimension of the use of clothes. The personal view and purposes of an author, and the role and values of dress and belts ascribed to the named individuals who wore them in the sources, leave some room for a characterisation of the specific and personalised conditions of the uses of belts and textiles. At first sight, this contrasts with the usual anonymity of the archaeological record, which makes questions pertaining to explicit personal views, law of persons and inheritance only speculative.³²⁶ In hindsight, however, the belts, girdles and baldrics are recovered from the burials because of the fact that they were a very personal possession in the first place and not willed most of the time, before the 8th century. As a result, some information about the personalised conditions of use of dress items can be found even in the anonymity of the archaeological record, although its study requires a modified if not an entirely different approach.

³²⁴ On our ignorance in reference to the constructional details of Frankish merovingian dress in most Frankish regions, see section 3.3 A brief critique of stylistic criteria and hierarchies of artefact values, see also Treffort, *op.cit.*, note 53, *ibid* p. 50, discussion in pp. 163-166.

³²⁵ Kent in the 6th and 7th centuries and the Anglian regions in the late 5th to the middle of the 7th century.

³²⁶ Compare the two sets of questions in this examination of both historical and archaeological sources at the end of the first Chapter, section 1.8 The aims of this thesis: symbolic values, cultural categories: consumers and their social roles. Key issues to be addressed, p. 50.

The material record is a collection of objective facts, but still the degree of their explicitness is more or less dependent on the degree of the objectivity of our own interpretation, our focus of research and our abilities. When the information from the narratives is tested against that of the archaeology and used complementarily as I am about to attempt here, there must be a defined line between the set of questions that it is possible to ask when we assess facts from a text and when we examine a cemetery. It is true that the written record cannot offer the same immediacy of approach about the appearance of early medieval people, or the technical details about weaving and sewing, but in reality it is only rarely that it is possible to reconstruct real objects and their uses successfully from their material remains. When this is achieved it is still an isolated case of individualised information, unless more comparative material from similar contexts offers convincing parallels. In this there is a limitation on the information from the archaeology, no matter how detailed this is. The information from the texts is also limited: the personalised titbits from the narratives usually reflect the stereotypical self-representations of élites and their idealisations, and not early medieval realities as lived in the rural settlements of our record. To these limits should be added the way change can be attested in our sources.

In the texts, for instance, we saw how the changes of dress systems and meanings within a social environment was felt over a very wide time-span; by contrast, in the examination of the archaeology of belts, change can be detected rapidly and/or variably, like the overlapping layers in a matrix or the change of a soil sequence between stratigraphical events within the same context of a rural cemetery. Change in dress artefacts can be observed much more dramatically in archaeology than in the sources, as well as in material details, in the ways something was worn, and of course, as we saw earlier, in a greater variety of forms and uses, which are not self-explanatory, and consequently some of which are unknown to us and are often characterised as deviant.³²⁷

³²⁷ For example, K. Brush has argued that the female funeral costume did not require the use of fasteners in its construction and that the placing of these items in so many of the female burials was probably to serve a symbolic function. See Brush K., *Adorning the Dead: the Social Significance of Early Anglo-Saxon Funerary Dress in England (Fifth to Sixth Centuries AD)*, unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Cambridge, 1993), p. 128. However, the examples where the girdle items survive in association with some cloth from layers of dresses as in the case of Wakerley, Grave 74, see pp. 288-289, note 525, which shows that the girdle hangers and the girdle did not always need to be on display, something which would matter in a funerary display as much in life as in death; in Wakerley, Grave 74 the girdle hangers could be more

Traditions and breaks from tradition are statements which are meant to be “read” and understood by an audience, even if these are reflected in practices that may seem deviant to us, as e.g. in a non-functional or non-decorative amulet or relic box hung from a leather girdle, or a hidden inscription that carried a message, an abridged psalm or a prophecy with visions of heaven, a curse or a wish to the *Dis Manibus*, a demon or a saint in a strange context, a decapitation or a prone burial. We have to accept beforehand that both the finds and also the examples from the texts reflect deliberate choices that made sense to an audience in our period of study, because what lies beyond the conscious and the deliberate cannot easily be the object of a systematic approach or proven.

In instances such as the ones mentioned above, the rate and nature of historical change, the functions and construction of objects, and the information that is obscured by the sources, it is not always possible to relate the archaeological facts to the texts. But although we cannot expect to find directions of garment construction in the texts with the immediacy and precision which the material record offers, or to draw statistical analysis results from entire regions, there is still enough common ground to allow us to start to ask the same questions of both types of source material.

The common ground for all that is found as much in the hoards of words in the textual descriptions as in the hoards of objects of the people in our case studies; it is not only a matter of a selection of a common interpretative tool, like the vestimentary systems and syntagms, or an organising device such as the axis of clothing, that are here used to organise and interpret different sources of material, which may be arbitrary. It is mostly a matter of the common cognitive categories³²⁸ pertaining to the subject matter of both texts and the archaeology, underlying the information we have been asking for

easy to reach as if in a pocket or a bag between overdress and tunic. It is a functional situation but expressed in a different way than that we would probably think. I think these hangers constituted the little things which, along with her gestures and habits, formed and owned by this woman, made up her everyday life; so the people who buried her, in this small rural community, remembered to dress her the way she used to; nothing deviant in this, a furnished burial is a multidimensional rite but we forget sometimes that these people once had a name and their own attitudes.

³²⁸ See Mauss op.cit., Chapter 2, note 13, on “total social phenomena” and “unconscious categories “that concern the whole of society and its institution in the section 2. 2 Towards a Taxonomy of Vestimentary Systems: the problem of the shifts in the meaning of textiles. Symbolic values . These categories of total social phenomena reflect the distinctive lines within the structuring elements of societies, such as status, gender, property, style, meaning, and the mechanisms by which change is brought about.

concerning social roles and identities formed within the primary structuring elements of historical societies such as status, gender, property, style, meaning, change.³²⁹

The formative axis of this enquiry is that the most recurrent element which objectifies most of the changing values in dress is the belt. We will soon see how this appears in the material record as recurrent and as prominent as in written texts and subtexts. Wobst is partly right to argue for the significance of distance and of visibility in the hierarchy of visual stylistic messaging. But the point of focus need not be the head or the shoulders if the distance is within our visual range. We are going to test here in the light of the archaeological evidence whether the overall shape of the garment, and the means by which a textile product is adjusted on a human body, has been the most crucial vestimentary signifier. As we saw previously in the examination of the historical sources, changes in the structural elements of dress can accompany or reflect the investiture of new social and personal identities. It is worthwhile to follow the way this occurs in the material record as well, by setting the questions that it is possible to ask this type of source material.

On the basis of the material from the urban and rural cemeteries in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, that is in specific archaeological contexts, as for example in a regional cemetery used within 80-150 years before its abandonment, we can ask the following questions: how many men, women and children were found wearing a buckle or a girdle? What was the ratio of use of a discernible form of belt in the categories of adolescents and more advanced ages when we have anthropological data? Are there any signs of a specific form of belt or a belt that preserves evidence of textiles in a particular region? Are these local products? What were the circumstances of use and how were certain categories of the buried population wearing them? Are there any recurrent functional features or homogeneous taphonomical³³⁰ characteristics related to the finds,

³²⁹ See the two sets of questions at the end of the first section. These categories actually underlie the structure in every social organisation and are used to organise meaning in an individual's world and to establish rules for everyday use.

³³⁰ Taphonomy is a term in mortuary archaeology; it has two meanings. Here it is used in the sense of the specific and unique spatial order and interrelations in the micro-stratigraphy of a closed burial assemblage between the skeletal remains, the specific characteristics of the constructional event of the tomb - be it a sarcophagus, an inhumation pit, a *tegulae* burial - its lay-out, the furnishings, and the grave goods, including their orientation in relevance to the body and the general context, the distances between them and this in reference to the main axis of the construction, their placing on or around the body. It is specified with main points and specific numbers exclusive to each burial used in the documentation: in the design,

the orientation of them and of the probable garment, the lay-out of the body, the positioning of the belt and of the textile?³³¹ Is it possible to differentiate the belts of the dead with an ecclesiastical vocation in this period? Why are some people in some regions still buried fully clothed in the 8th century after the cessation of the furnished burial rite? What are the belts, if any, of the people buried at the outskirts of the cemetery, the deviants, the poor, the foreigners, the sick? And lastly, what are the symbolic and ideological elements in the usage of these finds as seen in the inscriptions on them or in significant features in the adhering cloth and organic materials?

An enquiry such as this will help us establish types of belts and also a few of the accompanying fabrics, and place their usage and the changes in it on a regional and chronological basis. In addition to this, whenever the material allows a view on the qualities of fabrics produced or used in a context and in a region, this will be added to the regional belt types.³³² The methodology for the description of the morphology of textiles I am using here accords with the criteria set by the Manchester Ancient Textiles Unit at

the sketch and the final plan of the lay-out and section of the tomb and in the register and excavation log. The other sense, is used in archaeology but originates in biology and environmentology. It is the process relating to the rate of disintegration of the elements comprising the remains of organic matter of a dead organism-flesh and bone, leather wood, ivory, textile fibres -and their break-down and transformation into not-organical elements and subsequently their absorption into the micro-environment of the burial. Consult for more information Champion S., *A Dictionary of Terms and Techniques in Archaeology*, (Oxford, 1980); Danvill T., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Archaeology*, (Oxford, 2003); Fagan B. M., *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*, (Oxford, 1996).

³³¹ See Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, ibidem, p. 249, especially her critique on the standard practice to describe costume in terms of metal accessories, while “textiles are treated as a disconnected subject” and her criteria for future researchers in the “Notes for archaeologists” ibidem, pp. 248-250. See note 322, and bibliography, vol II, for the work consulted in this thesis of V. Evison, G. Owen- Crocker and E. Coatsworth for Anglo-Saxon England, especially these last two for the reconstructions and the textile analysis related to the Middle Saxon depictions, (I use here their chronological phasing system), their use of the written sources and glossaries.

The work of Hayo Vierck is the only case where a critical archaeological contextualisation and integration of written sources and archaeology of dress in Francia was attempted with convincing success in the late 1970's, (Vierck H., *Religion, Rang und Herrschaft im Spiegel der Tracht*, in Ahrens, C., (ed.), *Sachsen und Angelsachsen*, (Hamburg, 1979), pp. 271-83) but he used only a few examples of the élites which were often compared to the early byzantine élite culture, see idem, “La “Chemise de Sainte Bathilde” à Chelles et l' influence byzantine sur l' art de cour merovingien au VIIe siècle” in Chirol É. , (ed.), *Actes du colloque international d' archéologie. Rouen 3-4-5 Juillet 1975 (Centenaire de l' Abbé Cochet)*, (Rouen, 1978), pp. 521-564 . He admitted in relevance to this problem that it was impossible to use material from the row grave cemeteries in a way that it would make sense as not enough publications of the textiles had been made by then, see ibidem p. 563, which was pretty much true at that time.

³³² A presentation of the main cloth types that have been evidenced in the archaeology of Francia and Anglo-Saxon England will be discussed in relevance to the sites and the dress accessories. I have included this issue in the presentation of the main cloth types and weaves in Francia nad Aanglo-Saxon England in the Appendix III.

Manchester University/UMIST: the cloth is described in terms that characterise the kind of fibre (e.g. wool, linen, flax), the type of weave which forms the structure of the textile (e.g. tabby, twill, tablet weave etc),³³³ the direction of spin of thread (e.g. z/s, z/z) which informs us about the quality of the fibre and the texture of the cloth, the pick ratio (2/2, 2/1) which informs us about the pattern of the weave according to the number of sheds opened by the treadle rods used in a vertical loom, and the thread counts that inform about the quality of the cloth (e.g. 17/18 threads per cm) in each system of weft and warp which qualifies a fabric as fine, medium or coarse.³³⁴

3. 7 Archaeological evidence for the structural elements of dress in burials and corporeal semantics.

I will try to argue here, in a survey of the archaeological record over regions of Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, that the belts found in the context of the clothes worn with them can provide us with the most information about the shape of dress, the layering of cloth, the ways this was put on a body.³³⁵ If we try to pin down the gender ratio of use of belts in the mortuary record of the regions that seem to be markedly distinct in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, according to the burial data from a great number of urban and rural community cemeteries, we get an extremely variable picture, especially for the 6th and the first half of the 7th century. The material in the following survey was drawn from geographical regions within which similar characteristics were found in most aspects of burial archaeology, corresponding to Austrasia and the Rhineland,³³⁶ Normandy,³³⁷

³³³ See the Textile Terms and Procedures (Appendix III) for the justification for this choice of terminology and the methodology of the analysis of archaeological textiles and types of cloth.

³³⁴ These last general characterisations will be provided whenever possible when it has been impossible for the researcher in the original publication to trace the exact thread count numbers and ratio of thread counts/picks in both systems, usually because of the bad state of preservation of the textile.

³³⁵ A close-up of particular case studies of cloth and belts and a discussion on the shape of dress, layering of cloth and detailed taphonomical features will be provided in the next section: “Regional features of belts and of associated fabrics and dress”.

³³⁶ See Appendix II, Austrasian-Rhineland sites: Vron, Bettborn, Toul, Ailleville, Dieue-sur Meuse, Neuville-sur-Escaut, Lavoye, Chaouilley, Mazerny, Audun-le-Tiche, Varangéville, Famars, Bouzonville,

Neustria and the Loire region,³³⁸ Burgundy,³³⁹ Aquitaine, Provence, and Languedoc;³⁴⁰ and these are used comparatively with sites in England, Kent,³⁴¹ the Anglian regions,³⁴² and the Saxon regions.³⁴³ The ways a belt or vestiges of a type of belting were deposited in men's and women's burials were various, and very different signs were employed to express this difference in the widely dispersed geographical settings of this survey.

A basis for comparison between the archaeology of belts attested in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England was provided when some recurrent patterns were observed in the data concerning the ratio of the use of belts between each gender of different ages, in different periods and in different geographical settings. A clue-based or semiotic paradigm had to be utilised, using "clues as spy-holes through which we could look to pinpoint elements that would enable us to compare data happening in different ways in different places".³⁴⁴ One of these spy-holes³⁴⁵ appeared when an imbalance was observed

Bislée, Vigneules-les-Hattonchâtel, Hayange, Walsheim, Berthelming, Montenach, Ennery, Abainville, "Thin-le-Montier", Heudicourt, Villey-Saint-Etienne, Wellin, Franchimont-Collin-du Tombeau, Torgny, Beerlegem, St-Brice (Tournai), Saint Piat (Tournai), Harmignies, Hordain, Bulles, Machemont, Montiers, Breny, Krefeld-Gellep, Meckenheim, Andernach, Inzing, Erfurt, Cologne, Dachstein, Waging-am-See, Selzen.

³³⁷ See *ibid*, Normandy sites: Frenouville, Herouvillette, Airan, Pouan, Saint-Martin-de-Fontenay, Giberville.

³³⁸ See *ibid*, Neustrian and Upper-Loire, Centre sites: Saint-Denis, Paris, Chelles, (the Merovingian cemetery outside the convent), Perusson, Breuël, Marolles-sur-Seine, Dolmen de Villaine à Sublaines, Jouarre.

³³⁹ See *ibid*, Burgundian sites: Crusailles, Annecy- Boutae, Monnet-la-Ville, La Roche-sur-Foron, (La Balme), Viuz-Faverges, Roissard, Saint Marcel à Tarentaise, Saint-Julien-en-Genevois, Cognin I-VI, V-VI, Vercoiran, Etrembierres, Sillingy, Seysinet-Pariset, Camp de Larina sur Amby, Thonon "Les Ursules", Crotenay, Sainte-Croix.

³⁴⁰ See *ibid*, Aquitaine, Provence, Languedoc sites: Paley, La Réole, Antonne, Petit Bersac "La Gravette", Marmoutier, Cloître Saint Martin, Lunel-Viel (Le Horts), Saint-Victor, Marseille, Estagel, Montségur, Tabariane, Laurens.

³⁴¹ This division reflects the similarities between the finds in burials, the metalwork and the textiles within these regions and mark them out as different. See *ibid* Dover-Buckland I-II, Bifrons, Chatham Lines, Faversham, Finglesham, Howletts, Lyminge II, Sarre, Chessel Down, Mill Hill, Polhill, Riseley, Sibertsworth Down, Updown.

³⁴² See *ibid* West Heslerton, Sewerby, Catterick, Scorton, Sancton, Cleatham, Fonaby, Tattershall Thorpe, Sleaford, Castledyke, Morning Thorpe, Spong Hill, Holywell Row, Little Eriswell, Flixborough, Bergh Apton.

³⁴³ See *ibid* Wakerley, Barrington A/B (Edix Hill), Burwell, Winnall I-II, Sutton Hoo, Snape, Broomfield Barrow, Wasperton, Dinton, Petersfinger, Westbury, Swallowcliff Down, Portway Andover King's Worthy, Ardale, Mucking I-II, Dunstable, Winterbourne Gunner, Winchester, Westbury-by-Shenley, Charlton Plantation Down.

³⁴⁴ See Wickham C., "Problems in doing Comparative History," *The Reuter Lecture 2004*, off-print, University of Southampton, Centre of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, (Southampton, 2005), pp. 1-35, esp pp. 2,12 *passim*.

³⁴⁵ For the term *spia*, which originates in the title of an article by Ginzburg, C., *Miti emblemici spie*, (Turin, 1986), pp. 158-209.

very clearly between the gender ratios of belts for the majority of these regions, while on the contrary, the belt ratio between genders was found to be almost of an equal level in other regions. This observation led the course of this enquiry towards an examination of three main clues.

Most of the time, the vestimentary attitudes of these societies towards the gendered human body were distinctly different: they could downplay the male body and display the female,³⁴⁶ or do the opposite, displaying the male body, and keeping only a few strongly distinct gender signifiers for the women,³⁴⁷ or else keep a balance between the most visible elements in dress that made a man and a woman materially different, at least by the means attested in the surviving accessories, such as the belt, which could be the same in size, form and decoration for men and women who wore it.³⁴⁸ Very interesting and significant variations and changes in these regional attitudes were observed over the time span of this enquiry.

The second clue concerns the concepts of the human body and the vestimentary expression of its gendered activities, as revealed in the burials in relation to dress, belts, and objects, at least for the period between the end of the 5th and the middle of the 7th century. It was very interesting to find where the focus of the display was; it could be meaningfully structured around elements of human anatomy as the waist and pelvis, the thorax, or radiating around the body, or placed in a small distance from it.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ As supported by Stoodley, see note 322, pp. 103-105 for Anglo-Saxon England, with which I partly agree, but there are other issues in this as well, to complicate the picture in Anglo-Saxon England, e.g. the use or not of swords and baldrics for men which can also make a very strong visible effect, the use of ostentatious bags by men especially in Kent and the large plaque buckles of a minority of privileged men in Kent and princely burials. In addition to this, the Anglo-Saxon dominant groups as found in the princely burials had tablet-woven gold braid decoration on their garments as in Taplow, see note 84.

³⁴⁷ As observed in Central Austrasia: see Halsall, G., "Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence," *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1) (1996), pp. 6-12.

³⁴⁸ As observed in some regions with a lower proportion of furnished burials than in the North (approx 1/4 of the total) as in Aquitania, Burgundy. See notes 340, 339 and Appendix II.

³⁴⁹ This clue actually derives from one of the main criteria that form the taphonomical features of a burial. All three clues, or semiotic paradigms are based on the premise of the legibility of the nonverbal signs such as those expressed by the meta-linguistic manners of interaction between persons and their gendered bodies, the focusing on the most dynamic elements of their social being in the visual display, the interaction to their distinct messaging systems. For I think, that in the way the body is present in language is also used to structure all norms of artefactual communication. Following Ruthrof's semantics, see Ruthrof, *The body in language*, (London and New York, 2000), vii, pp. 30-31, I am primarily searching here for meaning events into the deep structure of language, and its artefactual expressions of creative processes and communication.

A third clue was tracing the manner of interaction in which status and regional identities could be expressed through a visual messaging code in the belts across different regions, when this was possible. The same objects could signal different things to different people by the way they were worn, for instance between women from different regions, or when the same objects were worn by both men and women in one locality and not in the same way in another. There is some evidence in the archaeology for the existence of different interpretational systems of the same belt-objects across various social and regional groups.³⁵⁰ This element should be added because, not only does Wobst not discuss shape, form and (most important) interaction between different social groups in his styling messaging system, but also all other existing systems of evaluation of archaeological finds have avoided doing so.³⁵¹

These three clues will help us to organise the empirical material and reveal the patterns in the use of belts for men and women in Anglo-Saxon England first, and then in Francia, in this presentation and examination of data and gender ratios. Finally, the similarities and differences between the data from Anglo-Saxon England and Francia, constructed around the semiotic paradigms outlined above and as observed in the evidence, will be discussed so as to assist an effort to address the questions it is possible to ask on the basis of the archaeological record at this stage: these concern the ratio of use of a type of belt according to categories of social distinctions of gender, age, status; the specific forms of belts; and, if possible, some specimens of the accompanying textiles found in some regions, and the circumstances and the ways these belts were worn.

³⁵⁰ See pp. 160-161 and notes 36, 37, the discussion on Wobst's styling messaging hierarchy which does not discuss the interaction between dress items and different interpretational and messaging systems across various social and regional groups. Here I will set out an exploration based on criteria that have to do with the shape, the form of dress artefacts, the ways artefacts reveal the relationship of people and their gendered bodies and interactive interpretational systems of stylistic messages communicated through significant elements of dress. I will return to this in the Conclusion, and compare it with the criteria for a contextual reconstruction of dress systems I used in Chapter 2, set out in p. 115 exemplified in section 2.5, pp. 94-95, 95-97, and section 2.6, pp. 114-119.

³⁵¹ For the discussion on the existing systems of evaluation of artefact types as the number-of-artefact-type-systems, see Owen-Crocker, *op. cit.*, note 40.

D. The archaeology of the structural elements of dress. Ratio of belts related to status and gender, textiles and local production, belts that were not worn, liminality.

3.8 Ratio of belts and their morphology and function related to distinctions of gender, status, age.

In the following examination there is a bias in the number of artefacts and in the archaeological preservation of textiles in favour of female dress, because in the period between the 5th-7th centuries it generally comprised of more metallic parts, e.g. the girdle hangings over a skirt and the brooches, not only than later on in the 8th-9th centuries, but also in comparison to the evidence for male dress. These metallic accessories were worn directly on the female body, towards which all the emphasis was drawn, and in a variety of ways as we will soon see. By contrast it has been argued for male dress ³⁵² that in general it carried less metallic accessories, that these objects were worn in a restricted manner, and that they were mostly of a standard type, such as a belt-buckle or two buckles or a three-piece set of plaque-buckle, contre-plaque and back-plate. Men's belts in reality were found to be worn always in the same way, at waist or hips, apart from the case of the baldrics as we have seen, ³⁵³ and therefore preserved much less information and less textile remains than female dress, which preserved metalwork and textiles on other parts of the body as well, such as on brooches and pins.

Male dress, and also the belts and buckles associated with it, was also generally found to be more conservative in types, forms and main elements; and, from what we know from the burials, it comprised longer or shorter tunics of various materials, ³⁵⁴ cut, colour, ³⁵⁵ width and length, as well as breeches, leggings, cloaks.

³⁵² See Stoodley, pp. 82 and 83-90.

³⁵³ See pp. 173-178, section 3.4 and notes 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, the discussion of baldrics in elite male burials.

³⁵⁴ Leather played an important role as we saw in the case of Sigismer in Sidonius Apollinaris poem see note 134, where the leather jackets and systems of thongs of the baldric of the Frankish warriors in late 5th century were playing a key role as well as linen, wool, (and colour also, green and red cloaks and multicoloured short tunics) as we shall see shortly in our case studies and this is supported archaeologically in Francia in the case of Varangéville, see pp. 276-280.

³⁵⁵ Colour from the archaeological finds will be discussed in Appendix III.

In Anglo-Saxon England, in the Anglian, Saxon and Kentish/Jutish rural sites of the late 5th-7th centuries, the emphasis in the artefactual gender representation of men was put on the belt accessories, weapons, and tools.³⁵⁶ Most textiles from men's graves were found on these objects in all areas.³⁵⁷ The objects, wrapped with textiles and placed next to the man, were the signifiers of his roles and activities, and were not put directly onto his body, even when a burial was well furnished. This seems to have been the rule for most men in all Anglo-Saxon and Kentish regions in the 6th and 7th centuries. The only exceptions to this rule are the buckles, the baldric fittings and the imported patterned-woven textiles and soumak weaves³⁵⁸ found in the large princely mounds of the Later Phase, in the early decades of the 7th century, at Taplow, Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell, Broomfield.³⁵⁹ The very lavish grave goods there, were found both next to the body as in Sutton Hoo, and on the body as well in Taplow and Prittlewell.³⁶⁰ Older men, however, are very rarely found with accoutrements unless they belonged to the élites.³⁶¹

Generally, the buckle is the most common find from the bodies in all regions of Anglo-Saxon England, in a percentage of 44% for the men and 34 % for the women in total, for most of the two centuries of the furnished burials.³⁶² In the middle of the 7th century, the ratio of men wearing a buckle went up to almost 50%, as opposed to less than 20 % for the women, who obviously replaced this item with other alternatives.³⁶³ This ratio mostly concerns the ages between post-adolescence to late maturity.³⁶⁴ We will follow now in detail how the vestimentary changes came about.

The buckle for most men was usually simple. For the 6th century, the percentage could be even higher, as a larger number of mens' graves (reaching 15%) contained evidence for alternative forms of belts such as belt ornaments, tags, studs and a few bone

³⁵⁶ I agree in that crucial gender point with Stoodley, *op.cit.*, note 322 *ibidem*, pp. 82 and 83-90. It seems that this point was made on the basis of Stoodley's exhaustive data base of 1636 Anglo-Saxon graves in 46 cemeteries. See *ibidem*, p. 13. This was found to apply also in the course of this study up to a degree in the Frankish sites in Burgundy, sometimes in Normandy, Languedoc, Aquitaine and Loire, less in Neustria and the Seine basin. See Appendix II.

³⁵⁷ See Appendix II.

³⁵⁸ See The Textile Terms and Procedures Appendix III.

³⁵⁹ See Walton-Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 238-241.

³⁶⁰ See Sutton Hoo, Appendix II, Chapter 3 note 86 (cf analysis of the textiles in Walton-Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 185-189), see Taplow and Prittlewell in Appendix I, Broomsfield, in Appendix II.

³⁶¹ See notes 84-90, discussion in pp. 173-178.

³⁶² See Stoodley p. 33.

³⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 34 and Appendix II.

³⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

toggles.³⁶⁵ It seems that the metal buckle worn by more than half of the men was for the tunic and that another tape or strap fastened the trousers. Rarely, as in Casteldyke Grave 55³⁶⁶ in the 7th century, a second buckle held the purse. Purses in the 6th century were worn almost as often by men as by women and these are attached to the waist-belt and could be decorated. One of the few instances of preserved Anglo-Saxon embroidery is preserved on a fine example of a checked and embroidered pouch with a cover in S/Z spun thread in both systems of warp and weft³⁶⁷ with very fine quality weave on the knife of a man at Worthy Park, Grave 75 in this period.³⁶⁸

In the late 5th and most of the 6th century, almost half of the men (45%) had weapons, spears and swords found with one or usually two simple buckles.³⁶⁹ Most of the graves of men found with more elaborate buckle sets in the 6th century, which are of local production (12%-16% of the total weapon burials) also have swords and strap-distributors,³⁷⁰ and can be interpreted as baldrics. These last are usually mature men.³⁷¹ In the same period, these baldrics can appear in a more modest form for even more men, with spears and/or seaxes found in almost half of men's furnished burials in Anglo-Saxon areas.³⁷² In the 6th century, the focus of display in the burials of men in Anglo-Saxon England seems indeed to have been on the objects associated with their activities, such as the spears, swords, axes for nearly half of them, knives, and a small number of tools, personal sets and bags. Most of these objects, however, even if placed next to the body

³⁶⁵ See Appendix II. As also found in a grave of an old man at Mitcham, Greater London, who might have undertaken spinning (a spindle whorl was found with him), Grave 223, see Bidder H.F., Morris J., "An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Mitcham," *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 56 (1959), p. 74.

³⁶⁶ See Appendix II.

³⁶⁷ See Textile Terms and Procedures, Appendix III.

³⁶⁸ See, Walton- Rogers, op.cit., note 322, p. 101 and ibidem, The textiles data base, p. 56, Kingsworthy, Worthy Park, (Hampshire) Grave 75 and Crowfoot, E., "The textile remains," Chadwick Hawkes S., Grainger G., *The Anglo Saxon Cemetery at Worthy Park, Kingsworthy, near Winchester, Hampshire*, (Oxford, 2003), pp. 192-195.

³⁶⁹ See Dickinson T., Härke H., "Early Anglo-Saxon Shields," *Archaeologia* 110 (1992), pp. 50-54, also see note 322, Stoodley, op.cit., p. 78. According to Härke and Dickinson, almost half of men in Anglian and Saxon sites of the late 5th and the 6th centuries had weapons (45%) and of these a 21% had decorated weapons.

³⁷⁰ These are not many, (6 %) but it is mostly men who wear larger buckles in the 7th century rich areas as in Kent, that are usually local products imitating Frankish originals or direct imports from Francia and in half of the cases, these are not weapon burials. According to Härke and Dickinson, almost half of men in Anglian and Saxon sites of the late 5th and the 6th centuries had weapons (45%) and of these a 21% had decorated weapons. This was reversed in the 7th century when the élite category only of a 17% had weapons. (See, Dickinson, Härke, op.cit., note 369, pp. 50-54).

³⁷¹ See, Stoodley, op.cit., note 322, p. 39.

³⁷² Ibidem, pp. 78-79.

and wrapped with textiles, were made so as to be attached to a belt strap fastened with a buckle. The high percentage of belt-buckles and the presence of baldrics, simple or decorated, attest to the fact that for almost half of the men, in all regions,³⁷³ military identity was a part of the social role in their active young and mature years. Even if the focus of display was on the objects accompanying the burial, and placed usually at the side of a man, as the wrapped weapons or knives, still the simple buckle was the main vestimentary gender signifier for the majority of them.

For the women, in the 6th century, simple buckles, girdle hangers and the round ornamental buckles of D-shape, heart-shape and kidney-shape that suggest a leather belt with a height of strap around 3-4 cm with metal fittings around it, are popular, especially in the East Anglian areas and especially in Kent, where the finds suggest a high number of these belts with metal studs and back plates in the 6th century.³⁷⁴ The number of other objects of artefactual representation pertaining to female gender, particularly the evidence for girdles, the accessory rings and bags, demonstrate that the waist area was very important in the construction of a very showy female costume in all three main Anglo-Saxon/Kentish regions.³⁷⁵ Although the percentage of brooches found at the thorax area as a single artefact reaches a higher level in this period (60%) than the 34% of buckles only, the supplementary evidence for the belt alternatives makes the waist area the more artefactually prominent in an estimated additional percentage of another 20%-25%.³⁷⁶ The varieties of the objects and the textiles preserved on the metalwork hangers suggest at times that more than one girdle was worn, on an inner and on an outer garment. The age of these women wearing the full kit of these showy costumes ranges mostly between puberty and menopause, and even later.³⁷⁷ However, the only element older women seem to abandon or pass down is the pair of brooches at the shoulders in Anglian and Saxon

³⁷³ In all Anglo-Saxon regions, including Kent, where for example the richest in number and variety of weapon burials were attested for presumably members of a dominant group as in Sarre, Grave 39B, including baldric and belt, a sword, seax, axe, shield and a pair of spears. See note 322, Stoodley, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

³⁷⁴ See Appendix II, Stoodley, *op.cit.*, p. 39 and Owen-Crocker, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 62-71.

³⁷⁵ See Appendix II Stoodley, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 33, 40-44 *passim*.

³⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

³⁷⁷ See Walton-Rogers, *op.cit.*, 322, pp. 240-243.

areas, while they retain a buckled belt or girdle, chatelaine, pin and sometimes jewellery.³⁷⁸

The evidence for girdle hangings, which could also be worn with a buckled belt, and of belt tags³⁷⁹ shows that most women had drawn the gown in at the waist or hips with something more striking than the rest of the costume in all regions. Costumes varied and so also did the ways these were girded; for example, most belt-buckles were found in North Anglian areas in the 6th century, where 47% of the women wore buckles and carried a knife at the waist.³⁸⁰ The display was multifocal but drawn towards the female body, and was expressed through a greater number of gender specific objects than the men of the same period, most of which hung around the belt. The main emphasis was on the waist or pelvis area; there was evidence for women's activities, as well as for the men, but in this case the tools were found suspended from their belt in bags etc. These included weaving hand-tools, such as the pairs of spindle-whorls for 1/5-1/6 of the women, and sewing kits.³⁸¹ The mortuary evidence suggests that women in each region devised different ways to wear their girdle or belt, higher than the waist or at the waist or lower at the hips.³⁸²

In the 7th century, the gender ratio for belt-buckles in this period is very variable, estimated in more than 50% for the men and less than 25%-20% for women, but in Kent

³⁷⁸ See *ibidem*, the costume survey, The textiles data base, pp. 49-107.

³⁷⁹ There is some textile evidence on the back of metal tags in a case from 6th century Alfriston to suggest that an embroidered girdle was used as a band to suspend a number of objects. See Alfriston, Grave 20 in Owen-Crocker, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 63-64, also Griffith A.F., Salzman L.F., "An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Alfriston, Sussex," *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 56 (1914), pp. 16-53, esp pp. 33-34.

³⁸⁰ See, Walton-Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 322 as shown on the evidence from Scorton, West Heslerton, Castledyke sites, pp. 136-138, and pp. 177-185. See Appendix II.

³⁸¹ I support this, on the evidence of the spindle-whorls, pin-beaters, found in 63 graves in 18 Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, see Walton- Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 23-26. The spindles and shuttles were usually made of wood and in all probability numbers of these were deposited but perished. The fact that tools of this type were buried in women's graves, *Contra* Stoodley, *op.cit.*, note 322, p. 78, who supports a very clear-cut polarisation: he supports that the tools were for the construction of male identity only, and the jewellery and hangings for the females. Female tools were numerous but made of wood and therefore gone. See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Weaving procedures, pp. 132-133 on Weaving tools from Anglo-Saxon sites. See also Harrington, *op.cit.*, Chapter 1, note 36, pp. 39-45 and 55-67. Up to a degree, spindles, spindle whorls, weaving spears or swords used as battens were sometimes interred (see, Walton- Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 322, p. 23). However, I can discuss here only the preserved iron spindles from privileged burials as in the female burial of Swallowcliff Down, Wiltshire in the late 7th century burial, see Speake G., *A Saxon Bed- Burial from Swallowcliff Down*, (London, 1989), pp. 30-31 and Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire, see Leeds E.T., "A Saxon village at Sutton- Courtenay," *Archaeologia* 92 (1947), p. 85.

³⁸² A belt could be worn high under the breast in the periods of pregnancy.

the ratio is estimated as 56% for the men and 24% for the women.³⁸³ After the first decades of the 7th century the girdle items for women also increased in popularity, reversing the data of the previous century in the total estimate of belt-fittings for both genders. The majority of men wore simpler buckles now, and an élite of 6% in Kent wore large plaque-buckle sets. The privileged men who were still buried with swords and baldrics in this century, in Anglian and Saxon areas, reached the 17% out of the total.³⁸⁴ Continental triangular two-piece sets, sometimes with incised, perforated or niello crosses or with filigree and garnets, that were worn in Northern Francia and Burgundy and less often the embossed type produced and worn in Aquitaine, worn by both men and women in Burgundy and Aquitaine, make their appearance in Kent but are worn only by a few privileged mature men (6%).³⁸⁵ This happens in the period when the buckles for women become scarce or significantly smaller. More men could have worn bags made of fabric in the same period, as a raised number of fire-steels and toilet implements were found in male burials gathered around the waist area, the equivalent of the girdle groups of women, but purse mounts are only found in a few graves of people of a certain standing.³⁸⁶ Although fewer men are buried now with swords than in the previous century, there is still evidence for baldrics, but these accompany decorated weapon burials that reach a percentage of 17%, excluding the very ornamental pieces of the princely burials.³⁸⁷

The gender signifier for men after the first decades of the 7th century has shifted from the objects surrounding the burial to the knife or tools worn with a belt, especially when weapon burials become scarce.³⁸⁸ The focus of display is almost the same as in the previous period, but its nature and accent has changed: the burials for most of the men are simple, accompanied by a wrapped and sheathed knife and a leather belt strap, sometimes with a few items worn in a bag, now lost, like tweezers and fire-steels. The same model of furnishing remains, employing the man's tool and the means it is attached to his body, but the stress now is more on a simple buckle when the man is not privileged and even

³⁸³ See, Stoodley, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 33-34.

³⁸⁴ See *ibidem*, p. 39.

³⁸⁵ See the Kentish sites in the Appendix II.

³⁸⁶ Appendix II and see note 322, Walton- Rogers, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

³⁸⁷ See Dickinson, Härke, *op.cit.*, note 369, pp. 50-54.

³⁸⁸ See, Stoodley, *op.cit.*, 322, p. 35.

more so for a few Kentish men. Change is also visible because military identity is not shared by as many men as in the previous century. In the burials of the dominant groups, the focus is both on the weapons and on the baldric worn on the body. The belt-buckle and the knife must have become the single strongest gender signifiers on an increasingly downplayed male body.

By contrast, most women of the 7th century seem to have worn a thinner belt strap or an iron ring from which various objects and chatelaines were hung.³⁸⁹ The belt buckles of women drop to 20%-24%, suggesting the use of straps without a buckle. Iron rings, which could be diagnostic of tablet-woven or fabric-manufactured girdles, appear quite often, in more than 20% of women's graves in the 7th century.³⁹⁰ A small number of tablet weaves that are preserved on the chatelaine complex at the thighs suggest that long, probably coloured, braids, girdles and sashes with hanging fringes were worn.³⁹¹ There is also some evidence for composite belts, made of tablet-woven fibres of flax or hemp and attached to a piece of leather and possibly fastened with a metal buckle.³⁹² The growing number of decorated metal tags, usually found in female graves in pairs, in the middle of the 7th century, especially without buckles, may suggest that the main means of shaping and often decorating a garment for most women was the girdle in this period,³⁹³ as jewellery becomes rare and more valuable, adorning the privileged.³⁹⁴ The numbers of women of all ages wearing purses and pouches varies in different areas, but in some regions 3-6% of burials show very distinct bags, like the ones with ivory rings in some Anglian sites.³⁹⁵ Although fewer metallic items are employed to accentuate the visual imagery of women in this period, the costumes still remain ornate and the focus is now

³⁸⁹ See Appendix II in all regions.

³⁹⁰ See Appendix II in all regions.

³⁹¹ Like the *Schleiergewebe* examples which come mostly from the 7th century contexts in North Anglian and Kentish sites. See, Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, pp. 134-135.

³⁹² See Lethbridge, op.cit., note 33, p. 60, Grave 72 at Burwell, Cambridgeshire.

³⁹³ Appendix II, see sites of the middle of the 7th century: Winnall II, (Hampshire), Winchester, (Lower Brook Street), Desborough, (Northamptonshire) see Owen-Crocker, op.cit., note 322, p. 145, Flixborough, see Appendix II, and Flixborough, Barking Abbey, and Whitby, see Chapter 2, note 254, for Brandon, see Webster, Backhouse, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 254, ibid pp. 81-88.

³⁹⁴ See note 322, Owen-Crocker, op.cit., pp. 143-147 esp. the example of the necklace of Desborough, discussed and compared to the finds of Winnall, in Meaney A.L., Hawkes S.C., *Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall, Hampshire*, (London, 1970).

³⁹⁵ See Edix Hill, and West Heslerton, (also Appendix II), see Meaney A. S., "Girdle groups: reconstruction and comparative study", in Malim T., Hines, J., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Edix Hill (Barrington A) Cambridgeshire*, CBA Research Report 112, (York, 1998), pp. 250-252 and pp. 268-275.

mostly around the waist, knees and the skirt and much less on shoulders and breast. It is significant that when most men wear only a buckle, and the focus shifts slightly towards their body, women's fashion adopted other solutions to accentuate the waist area.

In both centuries of furnished burials in Anglo-Saxon England, less than 10% of the children had grave goods, especially those under twelve, which seems to be a significant threshold; the most usual grave-find is the bead, probably used as a button.³⁹⁶ In the 6th century, it seems that more children or juveniles appear with miniature knives or (usually) a necklace, than in the 7th. There is no evidence for tablet-woven braids, girdles or cords with the exception again of a small number of Kentish privileged girls who were dressed as grown women in which the general outlines of the 6th century context applied.³⁹⁷ Woven girdles or cords must have been the main form of keeping childrens' clothes shut and in place, which did not leave traces.

After this survey of the gender ratios of belts and of the visual display and body focus factors, it is possible to explore the manner in which dress pertaining to status and regional identity was expressed through the belts in different ways across regions.

The regional differences in the use and appearance of belts during the late 5th and 6th centuries started to alter after the turn of the 7th century. Costume was moving away from the norms of the 6th century among the communities in Saxon, Anglian and Kentish regions. It is for the women in all areas that regional differentiations are more visible in the costumes of the 6th century and also the changes in fashion. For example, even when the same girdle items were worn in two regions, the archaeology has attested to regional differences in the manner these were worn: it is possible that in Saxon areas, the hangers were worn in a pouch or hidden, whereas in Kent they could be worn in bunches suspended in stages from the hip to the knee and displayed.³⁹⁸ Probably the keys suspended from a chatelaine meant different things in Kent than in Anglian regions,

³⁹⁶ See Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, pp. 217-218, 127, 132, 133, 180, passim. The bead could have been used as a button as suggested by Brush K., *Adorning the Dead: the Social Significance of Early Anglo-Saxon Funerary Dress in England (Fifth to Sixth Centuries AD)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Cambridge, 1993), p. 95. For more information, see Crawford S., *Age differentiation and related social status: a study of Earlier Anglo-Saxon Childhood*, Unpublished D.Phil Thesis, Faculty of Geography and Anthropology, The University of Oxford, (Oxford, 1991)

³⁹⁷ These are Graves 11 at Hollywell Row and Grave 7, at Finglesham. See Owen-Crocker, op.cit., note 322, p. 102.

³⁹⁸ As worn at Wasperton (see Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, pp. 143, 170) and Dover Buckland II, See Appendix II, Saxon and Kentish sites.

signifying in the latter, the role of at least a significant portion (almost 2/3) of women of reproductive age, if wearing the full kit is a sign of this at West Heslerton - or else their position in the household for a more restricted number of women, if the key is a signifier of household economics at Sarre. This may mean that girdle hangers, worn by all wives in a region, or by the women only of substantial households in another, may emphasise in some regions a horizontal and in others a vertical visual perception of social status. As seen previously, a Kentish woman had good reasons to display her status, as men's appearance in this region was also markedly expressed with showy items. In this example of the visibility of the girdle hangers, it is probable that the waist area signalled in most cases a number of overlapping social identities, including the marking out of the gender of a woman and her cultural origins, especially if she was of a certain social standing. The messages needed to be more explicit and clarified in the case of women it seems, rather than in the case of men in most areas and periods - most obviously until the beginning of the 7th century but also well after that, even when costumes became different.³⁹⁹ This may be because more items in the 6th century were needed to signify more vertical and horizontal social distinctions between women than was the case for men, although the multiplicity of messages in women's dress could blur this visual information. The same happens with the men in Kent, where only a few of them are found wearing large imported plate-buckles in an area where there are less weapon burials, and probably less weapons and baldrics are worn at the beginning of the 7th century than in the other regions.

These regional costumes, used to demarcate differences of origin and also of culture and perhaps different customs and attitudes, changed to create more homogeneous fashions in the 7th century. But for the women at least, until after the middle of the 7th century, the girdle items retained their role even on a comparatively simpler costume.

The ways in which gender and status differences were articulated were also expressed by the difference in the form of belt-fittings: when the same object was worn by both genders, as in Kent in the 6th century, the objects around the waist became distinct between genders. When privileged men in Kent start wearing two-piece plaque-

³⁹⁹ See Stoodley, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 33-39. This perhaps for reasons of endogamy between closely knit rural communities in the 6th century, but a further discussion of this is outside the limits and the aims of this study.

buckles, the privileged women, at least in this region, drop the D-shaped buckles worn with a number of brooches on the chest, and start wearing girdles with chatelaines and sashes on a new type of dress. Status is then signified by necklaces.⁴⁰⁰ The politics of display seem to have shifted in this region and the bodily focus with it. Similarly, when the same simple buckle is worn by both genders in the Anglian and Saxon regions in the 6th century, the women hang objects from it and stand out with a display of large long brooches, fasteners etc, whereas almost half of the men wear the simple buckle plus a strap for a knife or a sword/seax. It is when fewer men wear baldrics and swords, in the 7th century, that dress changes for both genders. This dress change perhaps reflects changes in the general terms that defined the lives, and also the status markers, of these people. Even more men are accompanied only by their buckles, knives and tools in the 7th than in the 6th century. It seems that there is also a difference in the costume of men then, if we judge from the change in the dress signifiers of their activities, and we can interpret it as the result of the accumulation of social responsibility, of military identity, power and wealth in fewer hands.

To conclude, in all areas in Anglo-Saxon England the expression of gender was very closely related to that of status, especially for women, who wore the most objects and belt fittings, which made up the most ostentatious display around their waist. This was accentuated at the end of the 6th century and went on until the end of the Later Phase furnished burials.⁴⁰¹ The most artefactually visible people were the women in all regions, where a broad category of them, reaching a 65% in its peak during the last decades of the 6th century, wore a great number of belt objects, sometimes luxurious and imported, as in Kentish graves, or locally produced, as in the North Anglian areas, worn around the waist area, especially in their youth and their mature years. The artefactual visibility for half of the men in the 6th and early 7th century is mostly reserved for the 6th-century decorated weapon and baldric burials, and to 16% or 17 % of them in the middle of the 7th century.

⁴⁰⁰ See the relevant section: 3.9 Regional features of belts and of associated fabrics and dress, pp. 275-296.

⁴⁰¹ This period extends into the Middle Anglo-Saxon period between 720-750, (I refer to the Chronology issues in length in Chapter 1, section 1.6., pp. 45-46,) although during the 7th century the social contest of dress was relocated to the jewellery but for the very few when the brooches and the buckles became more scarce. Jewellery is a system of its own but its occurrence is sporadic although impressionable, and does not inform us about the form and shape of dress for most of the people, so it will not be discussed here.

The focus is drawn towards the body for a small proportion of Kentish men and in the princely burials in mounds in the 620's-640's.

Conversely, most men wore a plain buckle (44%-56%), and this was accentuated in the 7th century, while the buckles in women's graves dropped dramatically; they may perhaps have adopted girdles to suit another type of garment. It is very probable that these facts, concerning fashions in the types of belts worn by men and women, reflect radical changes in Anglo-Saxon society, as well as difference in customs, concepts of regional identity and the ways of accumulation and distribution of wealth from the late 5th to the middle of the 7th century.

The study of the ratios of the different types of belt worn by men, women and children during the part of their lives where a belt was deemed essential to their outfit, show that gender and status difference in fashion in Anglo-Saxon England was multidimensional, comprising both regional identities and vertical and horizontal social distinctions, which were expressed variably by the same objects. The same code of visual perception was employed, but "read" through different interpretations of the signs of status and of regional identity. The focus of display was indeed on the female body and also around the objects used by the men, suggesting a polarisation of gender roles, as even the weaving tools for a number of women were found suspended from bags around their belt and not deposited at their side as the spears were for the men. Status and gender differences were painstakingly maintained through dress in different ways and accentuated along these lines over the entire period of the furnished burials, not only during the 6th century.⁴⁰² I have tried to show here that the change in vestimentary attitudes expressed in the belts and girdles most people wore, and possibly in the demands and the production of these accessories in the first decades of the 7th century, was far less a result of the conversion to Christianity⁴⁰³ than a reflection of deeper

⁴⁰² *Contra* Stoodley, op.cit., note 322, ibidem, p. 49 and pp. 78, 79 passim, who argues that : "that the expression of gender was at its strongest in the 5th and 6th centuries".

⁴⁰³ See Owen-Crocker, op.cit., note 322, pp. 128-132, 143-14, although it is very rightly supported there that the dominant female élites adopted Byzantine styles in the 7th century, as the vestimentary idiom of luxury; this was actually a display of power and social success enrobed in an insinuation of christian modesty. The Byzantine styles that were adopted, however, were considered fashionable in the Byzantine court, half a century earlier, in the middle of the 6th century, than their adoption or adaptation by a restricted élite in 7th century Anglo-Saxon England. There is evidence for the patterned full-length silk tunic worn with fringed sashes at the waist, jewellery, coifs and *pallia*, in the 546-548 San Vitale, Ravenna mosaic of Empress Theodora and the ladies of the court, after Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, ibidem, fig. 5.35.

changes within Anglo-Saxon society. It is possible that status changes among men created instability in the existing social structures and dictated changes in their dress and objects.⁴⁰⁴ This meant that gender relations also had to be readapted, and this affected the visual signs pertaining to these in dress, even if the structural axis remained the same.⁴⁰⁵

In Francia, too, the items worn around the waist, the belt, the baldric, the belt-fittings and the knife and purse, the varieties of buckle plates, buckle reliquaries and strap-ends, the iron rings from girdles and the systems of chains worn from waist to knee (even evidence for later 8th century tablet-woven girdles) were found more often than anything else to have accompanied the furnished burials of both genders, as we shall see in the following account of all areas of Francia where the furnished burial rite was attested.

The ratio of men and women wearing buckles or girdles evidenced in this survey was very variable, according to the vestimentary idioms of specific areas which generally employed the fashions of the flourishing local productions.⁴⁰⁶ In general, the gender ratio for buckles, belts and girdles of all forms was found as follows: in the 6th century, in Austrasia and in the Rhineland, 75% of men wore some type of simple buckle while 65% of buckles and girdle rings are evidenced for women;⁴⁰⁷ this changes in the 7th century, where the number of women wearing buckles and iron rings drops to less than 30%-25% of their total or even less in central Austrasia, while in the Rhineland they wear smaller buckles, chatelaines and rings in 30% of the cases examined.⁴⁰⁸ The ratio for men in the

See fig 3.30a. We do not know what exactly was worn in Byzantium in the early 7th century, so it is difficult to compare with contemporary Anglo-Saxon fashions. However the closer we can get seems to be the reconstructions from the finds in the Oppian Hill in Rome, for the 7th century, see note 151. See *infra* fig 3.30b.

⁴⁰⁴ This could be an answer to the crucial question posed -and left unanswered- by Stoodley, *op.cit.*, note 322, p. 1: "Why was it necessary for a given society at a given time to stress gender relations?"

⁴⁰⁵ On "Byzantine fashion" see *supra* Owen-Crocker, *op.cit.*, note 322, pp. 144-148, Magoula, *op.cit.*, Chapter 2, note 142 and Vierck, *op.cit.*, note 331, note pp. 521-564.

⁴⁰⁶ For example, see Appendix II, Frankish sites: Aquitanian embossed types of plate-buckles, incised and gilded, triangular nielloed two-piece sets produced and worn in Austrasia, Centre and Burgundy, incised and gilded, damascened or garnet and glass inlaid North Frankish Neustrian belt-fittings comprising plate and counter-plate buckles, and the incised trapezoidal, or type D Burgundian buckles, finally chatelaines of various types.

⁴⁰⁷ See Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites.

⁴⁰⁸ See Halsall, G., "Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence," *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1) (1996), pp. 8-12 about the changes in dress as attested by the artefact types between the late 6th and the 7th century, and in Appendix II for Rhineland.

7th century remains as high as in the 6th century.⁴⁰⁹ In Neustria, Normandy, the Centre and Aquitaine in the 6th century, 65% of men wear buckles and 35% of the women wear a buckle or a girdle ring; in the same areas until the middle of the 7th century, there is no significant change, with perhaps the men's belt ratio rising.⁴¹⁰ In Flanders, in the 6th century, 55% of men wear buckles and 30% of women and another 20% of women wear rings and intricate chatelaines, making up a 50% in total. In the 7th century, there are richer examples of belts in Flanders, mostly for men, but the gender ratio of the use of belts is approximately the same, although more iron rings are found.⁴¹¹ In the Visigothic cemeteries of Septimania of the 6th and the first decades of the 7th century, 95% of men wear buckles and 60% of the women.⁴¹² In the later 7th century there is a drop in numbers for both sexes.⁴¹³ In Provence and Languedoc, the limited numbers of the published furnished Merovingian burials allow for an estimation of the same ratio as in Aquitaine,⁴¹⁴ but these burials are only 10% of an unpublished total of perhaps another 15% of probable furnished burials, but also it seems that the furnished rite was not very popular for a large section of the population, who were buried in shrouds and were mostly accompanied with a shroud pin in the early and middle Merovingian period.⁴¹⁵ In Burgundy too, there are a great number of furnished cemeteries, but they represent only approximately a quarter of the total published Burgundian mortuary record of the furnished and unfurnished type.⁴¹⁶ In the furnished cemeteries, known as "Burgundian", the percentage of Burgundian, Aquitanian and rarely northern Frankish belt types in the furnished burials is represented by almost 30% of the people buried in these cemeteries, and it reaches almost 45% in a few cases. This percentage reflects the evidence for belts worn for both men and women, which in this area is of an almost equal ratio of 45%, in both centuries of these sites which practice the furnished burial rite, but in total in Burgundy, this accounts for less than one fifth of the total, if we comprise this type of

⁴⁰⁹ See Appendix II Austrasian and Rhineland sites.

⁴¹⁰ See the Normandy, Neustria, Paris basin, the Centre, Aquitaine, Appendix II.

⁴¹¹ See the Austrasian sites situated in Flanders, Appendix II.

⁴¹² See the Visigothic cemeteries of the South in Appendix II.

⁴¹³ See *ibid*, Appendix II.

⁴¹⁴ See *supra* note 410 and also pp. 258-259: the Aquitanian ratio in the 6th century: 65% for the men and 35% for the women, no significant difference was attested in this ratio in the next century.

⁴¹⁵ See Appendix II (Francia).

⁴¹⁶ See Collardelle, *op.cit.*, note 53, *Interprétations*, pp. 345-354 and *ibidem*, *Annexe*, pp. 387-419.

cemetery with the rest of the non furnished cemeteries from the end of the 5th to the middle of the 7th century which form the majority.⁴¹⁷

The types of belts worn by men in Francia in the late 5th, 6th and 7th centuries will be briefly described here: there is a great variety among regions⁴¹⁸ and unfortunately only for some regions do we have sufficient anthropological data to confirm the age ratio of the people who wore given types of belts. However, it is possible to distinguish three great local, cultural and artefactual divisions, of the North, the Centre, the South, that dictate different vestimentary attitudes in 6th and 7th century Francia for men and women.

In the case of men, in the rural cemeteries of the Austrasian North and the Rhineland, it is mostly the weapon burials that are accompanied by ornate baldrics or plate-buckle sets in late 5th and throughout the 6th century.⁴¹⁹ These amount to 1/3 of the total of men, in their young mature years, who wear baldrics attested by belt-fittings worn usually with a very good quality damascened plate-buckle, or more rarely a strap with fittings without a plate-buckle, as in cemeteries of poorer communities like Chaouilley, while the great majority of the rest wear plain buckles.⁴²⁰

This fashion is mostly observed from the early until the middle of the 6th century in Neustria and the Seine basin as well. The burials of men there, which include ornate baldrics and plate-buckles, are numerous, reaching percentages of 25% -40% of the total of the men buried, but do not reflect attitudes restricted to an élite but to a proportion of young and mature men displaying their local identity through prestigious local products, and, for most of them, military identity and a certain social standing.⁴²¹ This is evidenced in the 7th century as well. In the regions of the Neustrian North, more men who showed signs of a relatively comfortable social situation, but who did not necessarily belong to the ruling classes, or had a weapon burial, were buried with large bronze or gilded bronze triangular buckle sets, in the 6th century.⁴²² It is very important that in a number of cases, especially in Neustria, and in few instances in Austrasia, these large objects were not only

⁴¹⁷ See Appendix II, Burgundian sites.

⁴¹⁸ Great differences were evidenced not only in the artefacts worn but also in the way the Franks disposed off their dead around Francia.

⁴¹⁹ See Appendix II, Austrasian-Rhineland sites, the examples in Krefeld-Gellep, Meckenheim, Bouzonville/Bouzendorf, Chaouilley, Ennery, Lavoye.

⁴²⁰ See Appendix II, *ibid.*

⁴²¹ See Appendix II, *ibid.*, Audun-le-Tiche, Varangéville, Vron.

⁴²² See *ibid.*, Neustrian sites (Seine Basin, Paris), compare to the Austrasian and Rhineland sites.

restricted to men by their form or decoration. In Normandy in the 6th century, more than 2/3 of the men had weapons, and half of them large damascened plate-buckles, usually found and probably produced in the Neustrian region.⁴²³ In some places, as in the 6th-century phase of Thin-le-Montier, in Lorraine, there is evidence for leather clothing in male burials,⁴²⁴ while in the same area, between the Moselle and the Ardennes, there is a high proportion of iron belt-fittings for both ornate belts and the plain alternatives. Generally in the North, most men wear a buckle, and, if they also carry a weapon or tools, there are more chances that this buckle will be sizeable and decorated. There is a high proportion of metal purse mounts in Austrasian and Neustrian areas suggestive of purses for men, and the most precious metals and gilded and ornate objects are found in the rural and urban élite burials in the Seine basin and Paris, between the Moselle and the Scheldt, and along the west side of the Rhine, including Cologne.⁴²⁵ It is mostly in these areas that, in the second half of the 6th century, cloisonné red garnet gilded and gold belt fittings, purse mounts and plate-buckles are produced, and dispersed across the Frankish North and as far as Kent. In the last decade of the 6th century, glass and garnet are enclosed in filigree and this becomes the fashion for the plate-buckles for men and for a few women in these areas until the first decades of the 7th century. It is important to stress here that fashion dictates are found in the archaeological record to have been followed in these areas, by the men of the élites who wore belt fittings of precious metals, and by 30-40% of the rest of the men in these areas, mostly in base metals.⁴²⁶ In the 7th century, in Austrasia and Rhineland, men adopt even larger plate-buckles, and the damascened types remain a constant of the region. At this period, a great number of sword burials are attested and are, significantly, accompanied with more ostentatious belt-fittings than the previous century.⁴²⁷

In the Centre, Aquitaine and mostly Northern Burgundy, at the beginning of the 6th century, there are pockets of armed and élite burials, where the men wear two- and three-piece embossed and engraved plate-buckles, probably the largest found in Francia

⁴²³ See *ibid*, Normandy, Frenouville, Herouvillotte.

⁴²⁴ See *ibid*, Austrasia and Rhineland sites and Neustrian sites.

⁴²⁵ See *ibid*, Appendix II.

⁴²⁶ See *infra* Appendix II, Austrasian, Neustrian and Rhineland sites. There are local exceptions to this, as also there are differences in the Normandy sites as in Vron (Somme), and Frénouville in the 6th century phases, where the women's belt-buckles are more ornamental than men's, see *ibid*, Normandy sites.

⁴²⁷ See *ibid*, Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites.

in the 6th century,⁴²⁸ of mostly local types. These are worn also in Southern Burgundy and in the South, but only in a restricted number of burials that do not represent a high proportion of the male population. Most people in Burgundy and in the South seem to have had simple dressed inhumations around churchyards, with a simple buckle and a pin, or were buried in an large open-air cemetery displaying similar artefactual characteristics to the “Burgundian” cemeteries, but on a reduced scale.⁴²⁹ The fashion for large buckle-sets continues until the limits imposed by the abandonment of the furnished burial rite around the middle of the 7th century. In the urban and rural cemeteries of the South, men can sometimes be buried dressed with a tablet-woven girdle,⁴³⁰ and only rarely with the large Visigothic cloisonné glass type plate buckles; these latter are worn by men who either wear the embossed types of Aquitainian type or incised local products, or a simple iron buckle. These male burials in the Centre and the South are seldom accompanied by weapons, showing that very spectacular buckle sets could signal a number of different identities in a Merovingian man. In the 7th century, triangular and perforated styles are introduced alongside the previous local embossed buckles, and they are evidenced until the end of the period of the furnished burials.

For the women, these divisions among the vestimentary attitudes of the regions of the Merovingian Frankish kingdoms are even more marked during the 6th century. A high proportion of women wore simple buckles in the row-grave cemeteries of the North and Rhineland. Difference in status could be expressed also by necklaces, or brooches and headwear, of course. More ornate plate-buckle sets of a slightly different form from the men’s and of smaller dimensions are characteristic of the very few women of the élite who indeed wear a showy costume and are buried near the focal point of a row-grave

⁴²⁸ See *ibid*, the Centre and Aquitainian sites: Dolmen de Villaine à Sublaines (Indre-et-Loire), Antonne, Petit Bersac, La Réole. For the Aquitainian typologies of buckles and plate-buckles of the 6th century, see *supra* note 106, Périn, *Galloromains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine Septimanie et Espagne*, pp. 149-152, and for a detailed typology seriality in Lerenter S., “Nouvelle approche typologique des plaques-boucles mérovingiennes en bronze de type Aquitain”, *in ibid*, pp. 225-236.

⁴²⁹ See Collardelle, *op.cit.*, note 53, pp. 345-354.

⁴³⁰ See, Boyer, *op.cit.*, note 76, pp. 27-47, about the man buried in sarcophagus V, in the 560-570’s in Abbaye Saint-Victor, in Marseille, in a hooded tunic with gold foil decoration and a woollen girdle tied with an iron ring. See also a discussion in Effros B., *Caring for Body and Soul, Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World*, (Pennsylvania, University Park, 2002), pp. 21-23, of the burials in Saint-Victor although the focus there is on the extensive role silk and linen played in outfitting the dead and not on the structural axis or the main points of focus or other taphonomical issues of the burials.

cemetery, usually marking out the founding family of the settlement.⁴³¹ The rest wear a ring to keep the girdle in place, or a plain buckle. In some privileged female burials in cemeteries across the Scheldt, golden chatelaine complexes, and chains that reach below the knees, start to appear already before the middle of the 6th century, some with Christian imagery.⁴³²

There are a few exceptions in communities in Normandy and Austrasia where more women, probably around 35%, wear more decorated sets of non-ferrous metals around the middle of the 6th century, among other metallic elements that show that a different costume was worn there, in which a girdle was pinned by brooches at the waist area.⁴³³ However the rule in Austrasia and the Rhineland for this part of this century is that a buckle is usually worn by a woman but this is of restricted size: even in the élite female burials in Cologne, Müngersdorf, Maastricht, Pry (Namur) and Envermeu (Seine-Maritime) in Normandy, where the same costume was worn, the gold or silver buckles are plain and the skirt or coat is shut at the waist with long brooches.⁴³⁴ Iron buckles and iron-shoe garters, after the middle of the 6th century, are very popular among women and characteristic of Austrasian cemeteries for almost half of the women in some communities.⁴³⁵ In the Rhineland and Austrasia this iron buckle can have a small iron chain for a knife.⁴³⁶ In Neustria, and also Aquitaine, on the contrary, more women of the élites partake of the fashion for the large plate-buckle sets, of the trapezoidal or triangular type, worn with a number of brooches made of gold and of gilt bronze throughout the 6th century.⁴³⁷ This perhaps has an effect in the North: there are changes in the rural communities of the North in the last decades of the 6th century, where more women (probably 35%), between puberty and mature adulthood, wore bronze gilded and silver-

⁴³¹ Compare with facts in these areas pp. 258-259 and Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites, Harmignies, Beerlegem, Selzen, Dieue-sur-Meuse.

⁴³² See *ibid*, Tournai, Beerlegem, Torgny.

⁴³³ See *ibid*, Normandy sites, Vron, Frenouville.

⁴³⁴ See *infra* Appendix I, Alamannic archaeological sources (braids) n° 4,5,6,7,8, Frankish sources (braids) n° 1, 4, 5.

⁴³⁵ As in Audun-le-Tiche, Ennery, see Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites.

⁴³⁶ See *ibid*, Selzen, Köln and the élite burials at Lavoye, Bulles (Oise).

⁴³⁷ See Appendix I, Frankish Archaeological sources, Saint-Denis female burials n° 7, 15 and Appendix II, Aquitainian sites, La Réole, Aquitaine.

inlaid incised large bronze plate-buckles almost identical to these of the men, while the rest took up the simple iron ring of a girdle.⁴³⁸

The larger embossed types of Aquitanian plate buckles, however, were found to accompany men's burials mostly, throughout the 6th century, which means that in the South-West somewhat simpler and smaller buckles were worn by women. A further change in fashion in the North, Austrasia, the Rhineland and to a degree in Neustria, is evidenced at the beginning of the 7th century: while men adopt even larger buckle-sets, women turn to the chatelaine complexes or iron rings, probably for girdles, and the vestiges of belts diminish in the middle of the 7th with only a few tags and belt straps visible. Conversely, there is evidence for at least one élite burial in the Loire at the turn of the 6th century, at Perusson, of a mature female individual, in which a quantity of preserved garments were worn without any form of girdle in an ensemble which comprised veil, a diadem and garters.⁴³⁹

In the Centre and Burgundy, the material from the "Burgundian" cemeteries suggest that the women wore at the beginning of the 6th century simple buckles of bronze or iron in the same proportion as men. After the first decades of this century, there is evidence to suggest that the large Burgundian D-shape buckles, trapezoidal large buckle-plates and even the large bronze reliquaries, were worn by equal proportion by women and men from young adulthood until past old age and that these were not restricted to the élites, as they were mostly made from base metals.⁴⁴⁰ There is no great difference in the belt ratios and the forms of belts used in Aquitaine and Burgundy in the 7th century. By contrast, in the Visigothic South, the spectacular bronze cloisonnée glass plates and the lyriform varieties were worn by women in great proportions in a community (30-50%), while most of the rest wore simple buckles or incised and embossed types.⁴⁴¹ For the rest

⁴³⁸ See Halsall, *op.cit.*, note 408, pp. 8-12. The statistical sample here included the facts from the communities: Chaouilley, Berthelming, Hayange, Audun-le-Tiche, Dieue-sur-Meuse, Mazerny, Lavoye, Ennery, see in Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites.

⁴³⁹ See Lelong, *op.cit.*, Chapter 2, note 65, pp. 219-231.

⁴⁴⁰ See Collardelle, note 53, Annexe, pp. 387-419, where are presented detailed descriptions of the most characteristic graves and their finds.

⁴⁴¹ See Appendix II, and note 340, Aquitaine, Provence, Languedoc sites, Tabariane, Laurens, Estagel.

of the women in the South, we can only guess that plain buckles and rings with fabric and tablet-woven girdles were worn from the late 6th and also into the next century.⁴⁴²

Children are found very rarely with any artefacts at all. If they are, these are beads, knives or plain buckles of iron or bronze to an total of less than 20%, unless they are royalty or belong to the élite.⁴⁴³ In this case, they are accompanied with miniature weapons but without baldrics, and jewellery and sometimes ornate buckles for women for the girls, which means that they were dressed as adults.

Even in this brief survey, it is possible to discern some of the features that made the vestimentary expression in Francia so distinct: the numerous cultural milieux were not only expressed by regional costumes for men and for women, but what was produced locally was exchanged, worn and adapted in other regions. The Neustrian plate-buckles, usually worn by men, were worn in Austrasia by women for a period, to display status, and they were interpreted as an integral part of the Austrasian female costume.⁴⁴⁴ The Aquitanian embossed sets, sometimes found in weapon burials, were worn in Burgundy and Septimania to mark out the men from the women, whereas these last wore locally produced multicoloured sizeable buckles sets as part of a showy costume with radiated brooches and pins.⁴⁴⁵

Fashions in belts also changed more rapidly in Francia than in Anglo-Saxon England, probably because of the quality and quantity of metalwork production and the rate of communication and exchange in the Frankish kingdoms. For instance, in the Lorraine and Normandy community cemeteries, it is possible to make out three or four different solutions pertaining to women's belts worn by three generations by the most

⁴⁴² As worn in Marseille. See Boyer, op.cit., note 76 and at Creuse, -a girdle made of canvas- in the Gallo-Roman period. See Lorquin A., Moulherat C., "Étude des vestiges textiles de la sépulture gallo-romaine de Fontvieille à Vareilles (Creuse)," *Aquitania* 18 (2001-2002), pp. 171- 187.

⁴⁴³ As in the case of the 7-year old boy with the boy's helmet in the 520-530's in Cologne cathedral, see Bender- Jørgensen L., "A Coptic tapestry and other textile remains from the royal Frankish graves of Cologne," *Acta Archaeologica* 56 (1987), pp. 85-100) or the little girl of 6-7 years, buried at Harmignies, Grave 82, see Vanhaeke, Verhecken-Lammens, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 182, p. 22, almost in the same period who had the full kit of an eastern Frankish lady with her, including a heart-shape buckle-mount decorated with glass inlay. Her dead brother was in the next grave, (81), with a miniature battle axe, glass and pottery. Cf about new insights on the issue of the role and probable absence of social agency of children in the usual unfurnished burials and in the cases they accompany élite women in England, in Crawford S., "Companions, co-incidences or chattels? Children in the Early Anglo-Saxon multiple burial ritual", in eadem, Shepherd G., (eds.), *Children, childhood and Society*, (Oxford, 2007), British Archaeological Reports, Inter.Ser. 1696, IAA Birmingham interdisciplinary series, vol.1, pp. 83-92.

⁴⁴⁴ See the discussion pp. 260-261.

⁴⁴⁵ See *ibid.*

comfortable strata within the 6th century: girdles caught with long brooches, small buckles, chatelaines, girdle rings. One factor to account for these changes, which gives the impression of a continuum of rapid interaction between cultural environments, is the movement of populations and the social forces at work in their subsequent acculturation and stabilisation on a grand scale, as attested in the pockets that preserve different vestimentary customs in Normandy,⁴⁴⁶ Flanders,⁴⁴⁷ Burgundy,⁴⁴⁸ Aquitaine,⁴⁴⁹ the South,⁴⁵⁰ and the numerous isolated burials with evidence for costumes that do not always fit in the Frankish picture of the first half of the 6th century and had no antecedent or further dissemination.⁴⁵¹

When the gendered semiotic paradigm⁴⁵² is put to test on the evidence from Francia, there are many exceptions to challenge the view that the items of gender artefactual representation of men were selected and used in such a way so as to downplay the male body and display the body of the female, as shown for Anglo-Saxon England. There are very significant regional and also chronological variations to this rule, although it may have applied in some furnished rural and urban male burials in the 6th century South, in the Septimanian areas under Visigothic influence, and also in some areas in Normandy. The plate-buckle sets in Burgundy were almost the same among genders in size, form and decoration, and were among the most common belt objects shared by the majority of both genders. If gender difference was expressed in dress in Burgundy, in the 6th and up to the middle of the 7th century, this was done in other ways, now lost to us, such as the length of a tunic, the colour, the decoration or the cut. Display in this region

⁴⁴⁶ See Pilet *et alii*, op.cit., note 49, Frénouville, Seiller *et alii*, op.cit., note 50, Vron, where probably a portion of the population were Saxons.

⁴⁴⁷ See Vanhaeke, Verheeken-Lammens, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 182, Harmignies, Hainault, where the chief family tombs include Thuringian pottery, metalwork and textiles, for the first two generations.

⁴⁴⁸ See Mercier, Mercier, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 168, Monnet-la-Ville, especially the very distinct phases of the Gallo-Roman and the “burgundian” parts of the cemetery at the turn of the 6th century including a few cremations.

⁴⁴⁹ See Appendix II, Aquitaine, Provence, Languedoc sites, La Réole, the sword burials and the large locally produced plaque-buckles and in Appendix I, La Réole, the burial with the gold-foil strip braid.

⁴⁵⁰ See *infra* Lantier, op.cit., note 515, Estagel, the Visigothic cemetery and the discussion of the textile finds pp. 185-188 in the next section.

⁴⁵¹ See notes 502, 526, about the “barbaric” princely burials of Airan, Pouan, Saint-Martin-de-Fontenay (Calvados) in Normandy, compared with vestimentary assemblages that could be worn mostly in Central Europe, or the Black Sea.

⁴⁵² See section 3.9, pp. 241-244-103 for the three factors of visual messaging and artefactual evaluation used as clues in the example of Anglo-Saxon England, pp. 246-256 *passim*.

was balanced between genders, although the attention was drawn towards the waist area as a rule for women and men.

There and also in the South, belts were used as the elements to balance what made men and women materially different. In Septimania the women wore coloured belt sets: the male body was generally downplayed there,⁴⁵³ although the well-to-do men wore similar objects to these of the women, but of a different style. Men in Septimania wore buckle plates less often, but they were as large as those of women; but these were not locally produced, and were usually Aquitanian. They also avoided coloured inlays and preferred the incised and nielloed type. So even if the women were more showy, some of the men were artefactually visible on equal terms, using the same dress idiom.

By contrast, women in Neustria and the Rhineland, and particularly in Austrasia, except for a brief period at the end of the 6th century when they adopted Neustrian style plate-buckles, were artefactually downstaged by the men. Even women of a certain social standing, but not necessarily belonging to the élites, in Austrasia could not wear the same belts as men in terms of similar size or decoration. They wore smaller plainer buckles or girdles and generally had fewer artefacts and shallower graves than men. For a period in the late 6th century, women in the North wore belt-sets, but these still had smaller buckle-plates than the belts worn by men there. These were possibly worn in the same manner as men's in Burgundy, Aquitaine and in Neustria and the Centre, in a proportion of the female buried population that reached the 15%.⁴⁵⁴ Élite men in Austrasia wore even more elaborate buckles and baldrics than women, sword scabbards, and purse mounts, in 10% of cases in the 6th and 30%-40% in the 7th century;⁴⁵⁵ the rest wore simple buckles and knives.⁴⁵⁶ The women of Central Austrasia who wore similar buckles to the men were of the most well-to-do strata and could wear these from adolescence until their later mature

⁴⁵³ This was more plausible in the case of the rank-and-file man.

⁴⁵⁴ See Appendix II, (Burgundy sites, Neustria and the Loire region sites, Aquitaine, Provence and Languedoc sites).

⁴⁵⁵ See *ibid*: in areas of central Austrasia, during the 6th century, a 85-90% of men wore buckles and a knife while only 1/3 of the men have weapon burials and belt fittings. This is a percentage higher than in any other area in the middle of the 6th century. The men had also more gender-specific types of artefacts in their graves and better furnished graves than women (see Halsall, *op.cit.*, note 408, p. 8). This was even more markedly felt in the first decades and in the middle of the 7th century where the most ostentatious gold and silver inlaid buckle sets were preserved for the men and in some communities as in Varangéville, Ennery, Audun-le-Tiche, the weapon burials, mostly scramasaxes, reached a proportion of 70% for all adult males.

⁴⁵⁶ See Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites: Tournai, Beerlegem, Franchimont.

years, though mostly as young mature adults. So the politics of gender display could have shifted in this area for a brief period, although only around the early reproductive years of well- to-do females. In Neustria and Burgundy elite women went on wearing these ostentatious sets until they passed into old age, as in the Etrembieres burial of an old woman in Burgundy⁴⁵⁷ and in the Arnegundis burial in the last quarter of the 6th century, which may signify that the belt sets marked permanent social status and not the reproductive phase or marriage value of a woman. The men in Neustria wore exactly the same sets as women, if they could afford it, even if they were not having a weapon burial.

In the North, and in pockets in other areas in most of the 6th century and in the 7th, however, attention could be drawn directly towards the male body, in burials that could be armed most of the time as in Famars or Harmignies in Hainault, or not armed as in Antonne, in Aquitaine, or furnished with tools and instruments.⁴⁵⁸ Certainly these men were buried with belt fittings and purses as much as with tools and arms,⁴⁵⁹ and they were much more ornate and artefactually prominent than most women, especially in regions like central Austrasia and Rhineland⁴⁶⁰ (less so in Neustria⁴⁶¹), and sporadically in parts

⁴⁵⁷ See Vanhaeke, Verhecken-Lammens, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 182, at Harmignies, a 6-7 year old girl was buried in the full kit of a grown woman and a two- pieces heart shape buckle with glass inlays, in the plot of the chief of the community, Grave 86.

⁴⁵⁸ See Famars, Harmignies, Antonne, in Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites.

⁴⁵⁹ In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon graves where mostly tools are found in the Later Phase burials male burials with tools are found during both centuries in Francia. See Appendix II, Austrasian and Rhineland sites: the Herouvillette chief-smith Grave 10, the needles, awls, scissors and scramasaxes in men's graves in Lavoye, Ennery, Chaouilley, Audun -le-Tiche for a 35% of the men in the middle of the 6th century and also see Appendix I, n° 12, Grave 16/1957 (partly violated, sword missing) at the Narthex of Saint-Denis, Paris, of a man with an early 7th century plate-buckle and tags, belt fittings from a baldric and near the waist area a set of the tools of a surgeon. See Salin E., "Sépultures gallo-romains et mérovingiennes dans la basilique de Saint- Denis," *Monuments et Mémoires (Fondation Piot)* 49 (1957), pp. 95-113 and Appendix II, Neustria and the Loire region sites.

⁴⁶⁰ See the urban example of the Minstrel Grave in Saint Severin, with his golden braids decorated outfit accompanied by his instrument, (see Appendix I, Alamannic, Bavarian, Thuringian archaeological sources, n° 5), the male graves in the rural cemeteries in the Trier region, Krefeld-Gellep, Meckenheim, Selzen, Andernach in Mayen-Koblenz, the cemeteries in Erfurt, Thuringia, Bonn-Kessenich, Inzing in Lower Bavaria. See supra Bender-Jørgensen, op. cit., note 322, Catalogue of Textile finds, Germany, Post-Roman period, pp. 233-344 (and Appendix II) and Naumann-Steckner F., "Death on the Rhine: changing burial customs in Cologne, 3rd- 7th century", in Webster L., Brown M., *The Transformation in the Roman World*, 400-900, (London, 1997), pp. 143-157.

⁴⁶¹ See Halsall, op.cit., note 408, pp. 8-12 about the changes in the 7th century: "On most sites (in the 6th century) male graves were better furnished than female in terms of the number and variety of grave-goods" and for the 7th century : "...the locus of decorative display shifts to masculine artefacts, above all the new, large iron plaque-buckles with frequently intricate and gold and silver inlays...this may have resulted from women wearing plaque-buckles and forcing the use of decoration to recreate the material construction of gender difference".

of Southern Burgundy (Haute Savoie, Isère and Drôme), and to a lesser degree in Aquitaine and the South.⁴⁶²

The new style of even bigger buckle sets for the men in the 7th century, with inlaid garnets, niello etc., could have been a result of the fashion of the late 6th century, when as we saw, a number of privileged women, younger and older, had appropriated at least in Neustria and Austrasia the large plaque-buckles of niello and gilt incised decoration worn and produced in the Frankish regions over the Loire in the mid- and late 6th century.⁴⁶³ That the buckle-plates and fittings became again bigger for the men in Austrasia in the 7th century is a feature that has mostly been observed locally and has been interpreted on the basis that the men were according to Halsall, “forcing the use of decoration to recreate the difference in gender construction”⁴⁶⁴ It is of significance that there is a rise in sword and scramasax burials in the area in the 7th century. Women in Austrasia in the first decades of the 7th century wear smaller buckles and return to the modest artefactual representation of the middle of the 6th century and adopt belts of a different type than the men, like the girdle rings, till the end of the furnished ritual. The artefactual differentiation in this area reaches a peak between the early and the mid-7th century, signifying a significant change in attitudes to costume. The same peak is not observed in other areas of Francia, at least not to this degree. Therefore, as to the prominence of gendered artefacts in Francia, the data represent a different and much more complex picture than the attitudes encountered in Anglo-Saxon England.

When the second semiotic paradigm, the focus of display in reference to gendered activities, was put to test in Francia, there were not many significant differences

⁴⁶² See Appendix II, Burgundian sites: La Balme, Faverges, Roissard, La-Roche-sur-Foron, Cognin I-IV, the “Burgundian” cemeteries that stand out with the bulk of metalwork for both men and women in a region with mostly unfurnished or “poor” burials as in Saint-Julien-en-Genevois and Sainte-Croix and Monnet-la-Ville. In Aquitaine -see Appendix II- the sarcophagi burials with gold-foil braids, weapons, plate buckles with bosses and incision decoration as in La Réole, Antonne, Petit-Bersac “La Gravette” in contrast to the sarcophagi burials in the Cloister of Saint-Martin in Tours, Marmoutier.

⁴⁶³ As pointed out by Halsall, see note 408, pp. 8-9. See the large buckle set of the burial of the Arnegundis individual in the 580-590 (Appendix I, Frankish archaeological sources n° 15 and also see fig 2.2 and reconstructions fig 3.3) and also the Frénouville, Vron, Harmignies cases of female burials and compare with the Burgundian cases of old women with ostentatious buckles. (See Appendix II and notes 49, 50, Chapter 2, note 182). These were buried in central areas of the cemetery, the ladies of the important family of the community probably.

⁴⁶⁴ Some of the largest reliquaries in the Burgundian cemeteries of La-Roche-sur-Foron and Roissard belonged to women on the basis of the paleoanthropological facts see Collardelle, *op.cit.*, note 53.

from what was shown for Anglo-Saxon England: the items of gender artefactual representation of men were deposited next to the body, while only those of the women were worn directly on their most gender specific areas. Even the much more numerous spindle whorls, often decorated or made of quartz crystal, and the few weaving battens in Francia do not change this fact.⁴⁶⁵

However, the focus of display was structured meaningfully around elements of human anatomy, in various ways which showed different attitudes towards the male and the female body and the structural elements of gendered dress in the diverse cultural milieux of Merovingian Francia. These differences were not observed as a regional constant or a set of customs in the sense that these were practised only within one area; nor are they visible for the entire period of the furnished burials, but they changed and shifted from time to time. In Septimania, the female expression of display was multifocal, comprising radiated brooches at the shoulders and a very colourful plate-buckle, and these were worn for longer than in other areas. Men in the South, on the contrary, wore buckles and knives mostly, these last attached to their belts and did not have weapons or tools around them. The focus was at their waist area and it seems that their activities did not need to be signalled further. The same focus on the belt for men and women was attested in the Burgundian burials, with the exception of the cases where the objects were placed over the shroud, as at the beginning and at the end of the furnished burial rite, or in the sword burials where a (usually restricted) number of weapons were placed next to the man.⁴⁶⁶ On the contrary, in the Centre, the South-west and the North, even if the number of spindle whorls in women's graves and also the quality of the materials employed are much more numerous than in Anglo-Saxon England,⁴⁶⁷ and in spite of the great number of ceramic and glass vessels and other grave goods that occur in graves of both genders, the tools and the weapons are usually more and found more often to

⁴⁶⁵ Cf Appendix II, weaving battens for warp-weighted looms were found unexpectedly at Sillingy, (Burgundy), and Herpes, Charente Maritime, Dolmen à Sublaines, in the 6th century, while in Anglo-Saxon England weaving battens are mostly encountered in the 7th century. See Harrington S., *Aspects of Gender Identity and Craft Production in the European Migration Period. Iron weaving beaters and Associated Textile Making Tools from England, Norway and Alamannia*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 1797, (Oxford, 2008), pp. 39-53. For their use see Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures. See figs 3.29.a, 3.29.b.

⁴⁶⁶ See note 53, Collardelle, op.cit., p. 345 and infra note 540, Mercier, Mercier, op. cit., Chapter 2, note 182, p. 39.

⁴⁶⁷ See Appendix II.

accompany men's burials. The focus there was on the woman's body and, mostly, her jewellery and belt, chain, girdle, as in Anglo-Saxon England. The difference for the Centre and the North of Francia was that the male gender was artefactually structured in a striking degree around both direct bodily display with very large buckle sets, baldrics etc., and also on objects signalling gendered activities like the numerous sword and tool burials. This was also observed in the Rhineland. This is a very different attitude towards the male body from what is found in Anglo-Saxon England, with the exception of the princely Anglo-Saxon burials of the early 7th century. In Francia this attitude lasts from the late 5th and 6th century and it is accentuated in the 7th century. It can be interpreted as an expression of contest and dominance that enfolds both the bodily status display and the activities of a man.

The third semiotic paradigm concerns the manner in which belt fittings pertaining to status and regional identity were used to express different signals across different regions during these centuries. The Neustrian plate buckles, usually worn by men in Neustria, were worn by women in Austrasia to display status, reproductive age and marriageability. It seems that a few aspects chosen from a number of multidimensional interpretations of these belts, including status in Neustria, were integrated in the Austrasian female costume for a period of a few decades, so as to serve certain social requirements envisaged in the politics of display in this locality. Conversely, the Aquitanian embossed sets which are sometimes found in weapon burials, from the middle of the 6th to the middle of the 7th century, were worn in Burgundy and Septimania to mark out the men from the women. The women there, as we saw previously, had a multifocal dress display and wore locally produced multicoloured sizeable buckle sets as part of a showy costume with radiated brooches and pins. Perhaps the men in Burgundy and Septimania, as well as the young women in Austrasia, were utilising the inherent cultural values of distantly made and slightly unusual objects, which for these reasons acquired an extra value on their own. The tendency to use imported belt-buckles to signify different signs across greater geographical boundaries is shown in the next example, of the Frankish buckles found in Kent.

There, a reflection of the Frankish fashion tendency for large belt-sets can be seen in the use of the same or almost the same objects, imported in all probability from

Francia, as worn by a few privileged men (6 %) in the early 7th century burials in Kent, and probably worn in the same way, perhaps to express different planes of distinction.⁴⁶⁸ . These ornamental accessories were worn within this region to express status and affluence, as signifiers of élite gender difference instead of a gender profile entrenched and grafted on top of a man's military identity, which was probably the meaning signified when these objects were found in numerous North Frankish, ostensibly masculine, sword burials. By contrast, for most men at the beginning of the 7th century, in most Frankish and all the Anglo-Saxon regions, a growing number of less prominent men, the majority in Anglo-Saxon England and also a good proportion in Neustria, the Centre and to a degree in Austrasia, adopted the knife/tools and simple belt-buckle as a clear gender signifier, which means that then the majority of men, as a rule, were much less artefactually visible than the women, in all regions of this study.

If we compare the results based on the spy-holes of this enquiry, we get the following answers, which are in direct relevance for the questions it is possible to ask of the archaeology of belts.

It seems that the artefactual difference between genders as observed in the belt and in the items worn around the waist, was crucial in both Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, but changes in fashions and costumes were expressed in distinct ways. In Anglian and Saxon areas the women had in the 6th century smaller buckles or girdles, and most men simpler buckled straps and swords and knives, to signify their age and status; while in Francia the artefact types used to signify gender were also focused on the waist area but in another way: the forms and sometimes even the decoration of this signifier was at times much more similar between the genders,⁴⁶⁹ with men wearing showy items too and women wearing large plate-buckle and counter-plates; another difference is also that decorated items could be worn by broader strata of people in Francia. The reverse of this trend, after this fashion was outmoded, was intensified by the turn of the 7th century both in Francia and in Anglo-Saxon England. The women, first in Austrasia in the first decades of the 7th century, and after the middle of the 7th century even the élite women in

⁴⁶⁹ In Central Austrasia at the end of the 6th century.

Burgundy and Aquitaine too, do not wear large plate buckles or triangular sets any longer. In the North, Austrasia and Rhineland, in the last phase of the furnished burials, women wear chatelaines, girdles and jewellery, as evidenced by the numbers of strap-ends, tags, and rings and decorative hangers, which can be very ornate, and different in form and probably signification, although the trends seem to converge in the 7th century towards simpler and softer girdles and girdle hangings - e.g. the Anglian chatelaines of the same period, worn in different ways in Anglian and Kentish regions.⁴⁷⁰ In Burgundy and Aquitaine, the plate-buckles are worn by men and women until the double-hooked pin of the shroud becomes the only find in the cemeteries, sometime after the middle of the 7th century.⁴⁷¹ The same is observed in Septimania.

Generally, however, if we consider the total of the evidence for the social strata attested in the mortuary record of the 6th and the 7th century, more items were involved in the construction of a female identity in Anglo-Saxon England and in Southern Gaul and the Centre than in the North of Francia, with the exception of élite women, and this was a matter both of the quantity of gendered artefacts and also of their quality.⁴⁷²

Through this enquiry, the multiple functions of the belt in the Early Middle Ages are also revealed. The belt, girdle or baldric was found to buckle and fasten as a strap, or to tie on a ring the girdle of the tunic of men and women, or to keep in place the undergarment. When it consisted of two pieces, or a set of three belt-fittings, it encircled a body and adorned it from all sides, signifying messages of regional origins, status and aesthetics in the round. As a baldric it was worn by a category of men to fasten the sword, seax, scramasax, or axe. But it is clear from the finds discussed here, that in the early middle ages, more than anything else, a belt or a girdle was used to hang tools from, such as the knife, utilitarian objects, toilet implements, amulets. For most people of both sexes in our period of study, the belt and its hangings was an everyday necessity: they encircled their bodies with the useful objects of their occupation, the tangible signifiers of what made up their world.⁴⁷³ The vestimentary idioms of this period reveal that people needed

⁴⁷⁰ See figs 3. 2a, 3.2b, 3.2c, compare with frankish chatelaine figs 3.32, 3.33.

⁴⁷¹ Collardelle, note 53, pp. 345-354.

⁴⁷² See Stoodley, *op.cit.*, note 322, p. 90.

⁴⁷³ The belt hangings could function then in the same way as a portable PC today for most people, but the people of this study seem to have been at least equally busy but much more communicative.

to carry these about them, use them and exhibit them quite a lot, actually more than in any other period in the middle ages.

To sum up, in most of Francia, masculine identity was signalled very dramatically as the numerous sword burials show, by both the belt and the baldric in both centuries of the furnished burial rite. It is of significance that in the Austrasian regions, during the 6th century, buckles, simple and ornate, but of a distinctly feminine type were also worn by women in the highest ratio found anywhere, as evidenced in Austrasian and Rhineland burials, and also in the Septimanian Visigothic burials in the 6th century. In other parts of Francia, as in Neustria, the Centre, and Burgundy, in the 6th century, the gender of objects could be blurred for a long time. Less affluent men of a certain standing, in less prominently militarised zones, in Neustria and the Centre, could wear in the 6th century the same bronze gilded objects, of the same size, form, decoration as women, as a common expression of social status. In these areas, the gender ratio of belt-buckles in the 6th century is almost the same between men and women. In the 7th century the same ratio remains, but the buckles become smaller for the women, while large buckle sets are worn only by men in the first decades of the 7th century, something that it is not observed in the Burgundian burials of the 7th century, as we saw.

In the Merovingian kingdoms of Francia the picture is much less homogenous than in Anglo-Saxon England, with better furnished Frankish male burials in the North-West attested earlier in the 6th century than in Anglo-Saxon England. There, a similar trend appeared after the 7th century for a privileged minority. The main lines of vestimentary differentiation between men and women were similar in quality if not in quantity in both Francia and Anglo-Saxon England.

It is important to stress that it was not the means but the way the visual messaging result came about that was different; in Francia, there were some exceptions for the women of the élites, who drew attention to their body and waist area almost as much as the élite warriors. The focus of display and attention was mostly around the waist, as in England, but in Francia changing fashions seem to have been used as a ground for social and gender contest between men and women. In some areas, in Burgundy, and the South and most of Aquitaine, there was a balance between the elements that drew attention to the waist area for both genders, which could be signified and shared by the same status

and regionality signifiers, or expressed differently but still in a balanced quantity and quality, as in Septimania. The contest for display was mostly felt in the North, where men had somehow to be both artefactually different and also more prominent than most women. The trend was felt during both centuries and not only during the intensive militarisation of the rural sites in the 7th century. If this is compared to the Anglo-Saxon changes in fashion in the 7th century as well, where a few men became more visible than the women and the rest of the society,⁴⁷⁴ it seems that the reasons for this contest of display and focus on the male body in the Frankish North had to do more with internal social struggles between male groups for power and dominance, where the women could play only a very prescribed role. If this was aided by or resulted from the rise in the number of weapons we cannot know, because the social situation in Francia was far more complex than in England. What we do know is that the belts and the visual display were modified for a variable proportion of the rest of the women in all areas in the 7th century.

Status differences among most Frankish women in all areas were very markedly felt after the first decades of the 6th and throughout the 7th century, apart from a number of poor communities in the North and the South. For the rest, the situation could be compared to that of the Kentish cemeteries, with the very rich Kentish female burials far outmatching the others. This situation was different from most regions in Francia and the Anglian and Saxon regions, where 2/3 of the women in almost every community were artefactually visible and overtly gendered.

The simple belt-buckles, chatelaines, girdle items of women were also found to have increased in popularity in the middle of the 6th to the middle of the 7th century in Francia as well as in Anglo-Saxon England, but not in the same way, as the numbers of these and their variations in Francia were more restricted than England. Very distinct girdle hangers and latch-lifters existed in Anglian areas, and the long bunches of keys in Kent remind us more of the chatelaines of the 6th century Belgian sites, or of the Rhineland.

If a man belonged to the élites, which are very well evidenced because they were prominently furnished with very rich weapon burials from the end of the 5th century and

⁴⁷⁴ Also argued by P. Walton-Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 322, on the basis of the Costume survey in Anglo-Saxon England, and the existing paleostopathological data of the 7th century, who supports that the conditions of living and life-span for Anglo-Saxon women deteriorated in the 7th century, pp. 244-245.

the 6th century in Rhineland and Austrasia, or to the well-to-do classes in urban centres, or to the category of Franks that was allowed to wear a sword, the artefactual representation of masculinity integrated a greater number of personal and social categories than in Anglo-Saxon England, including items worn on a man's body and also weapons and tools deposited next to or around the body, as we saw in Famars, in Lavoye, in the élite male burials of Saint-Denis and in rural cemeteries of chiefs with tools and weapons.⁴⁷⁵ This is the plane where most differences are found in this comparison between the ratios of belts in Anglo-Saxon England and Francia. However, the poorest men in the rural communities in the North, Centre and South of Francia, that formed 40%-60% of the total, usually had the simple buckle and the knife as grave goods throughout the period of furnished burials in Francia, for most of the 6th and especially in the 7th century; and their identity was signalled in the same way as in Anglo-Saxon England. For the rest, more complex signifiers of masculinity and femininity were used than a standard belt and knife or an iron ring of a girdle, which was also reserved for older people: this shows that for a substantial proportion of the men and (to a lesser degree) of the women among the Franks, reaching at least 30%, the definition of their status was complex, and required more signifiers than the standard kit of the dependant or the lord. This is a very different picture from 6th- and to an extent 7th-century Anglo-Saxon society, which displayed a more popularized costume, shared by more than half of the people in the regions, and simpler social organisation, simpler systems of exchange and distribution of wealth and consequently simpler mechanisms of status recognition in dress.⁴⁷⁶

Wobst did not discuss the significance of the shapes, the functions and the values ascribed to the most prominent elements of visual hierarchy in dress. We have discussed here the shapes, the functions of belts and have added the different interpretations of the belt objects that were held across regions and countries in the periods of this study. Here the criterion of artefactual visibility was qualified further, and the dimensions of the focus of display on or around a body, and comparative information on relative and contextual

⁴⁷⁵ See notes 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, and discussion pp. 174-175.

⁴⁷⁶ And consequently, a simpler social organisation, having these simpler systems of exchange and distribution of wealth.

artefactual prominence, were added.⁴⁷⁷ The inquiry across different cultural milieux shown here attest that a belt or a girdle could become a nexus of stylistic messages between early medieval men and women, diverse social categories, the Franks and the Anglo-Saxons. I cannot think of another vestimentary object which would reveal the quality and quantity of the information discussed above. The ratio of belt types worn by men, women and children, old and young, varied; but it was very high in comparison to all other surviving vestiges of dress, and it supplies us with more information than anything else because belts served different functional and cultural purposes. Even if most men wore a buckle in all the regions of this study, and even if in Northern Francia the belts of the men were more visible, women's belts and girdles in both Francia and Anglo-Saxon England were encountered in a greater number of variations, comprising other artefacts as well than anything else in the mortuary record. The exports and imports of these objects and the changes in fashions attest that the belts were part of flourishing regional production networks and that they were signifiers of cultural, regional and ethnic identities and of a nuanced aesthetics in them. The conditions of use of these belts, revealed in the particular circumstances of the archaeological finds in the next section, will inform us more about the shape of the garment and the clothes worn in the regions of this investigation.

But now we must allow the archaeology of textiles and belts speak in the artefactual idiom of the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons themselves.

3. 9 Regional features of belts and of associated fabrics and dress

The circumstances and the ways belts were worn across different regions will be examined in this section, and also the textiles and the shape of dress found in particular regions for the period of the furnished burials; the functional and taphonomical characteristics of burials with textile information will supply the basis of the enquiry

⁴⁷⁷ The outstaging or downplaying of the male or female body by the artefacts chosen to accompany it and the way these were worn, in comparison to what was usually worn in the period of the study, the particular region, the particular vestimentary norms of the site, constituting the context of the assemblage.

here. A number of case studies will offer a closer look at belts in relation to the finds, the orientation of them and of the probable garment according to the positioning of the belt and the textile fragments. The previous survey of the ratios and general conditions of use of belts by both genders will provide the framework for an integration of what we know about the use of belts, the different types of dress and some information on the cloth produced in areas within the survey. This will help this attempt to envisage the circumstances within which certain categories of people wore these belts within the recurrent taphonomical characteristics and functional features of our regions.⁴⁷⁸

The cemetery of Varangéville lies in Meurthe-et-Moselle, a département that corresponds to Lorraine in Austrasia; it includes 34 registered dressed inhumations which are dated on the basis of the metalwork finds of buckles mostly, between the early 6th and the beginning of the 8th century. Although it may have been an ordinary open-field or row-grave cemetery, it is unique in that the chlorides in the soil permitted a very rapid oxydisation of the iron objects, so a lot of the textile fragments in contact with them were impregnated with the salts of iron before decomposing. What was left behind is called a pseudomorph,⁴⁷⁹ especially in graves 2, 15, 16.⁴⁸⁰ Grave 16 is the pit burial of a young woman in *decubitus dorsalis* who wore a rectangular iron buckle with plate and matching counter-plate with three bosses of bronze, each preserving extensive remains of textiles and of a leather strap, and a long pin of bronze on the chest, a clay bead necklace around the neck, dated to around 625-50. The buckle plate was covered in a bleached linen tabby z/z spun, in 1/1 pattern which is characterised as fine (20 counts per cm for both the warp and weft systems) and formed a lot of pleats, but no stitching survived.⁴⁸¹ The buckle-plate had the above-mentioned layer in front under another layer, and two

⁴⁷⁸ See the set of questions it is possible to ask on the basis of the archaeological record, pp. 239-240.

⁴⁷⁹ Where there are metal artefacts in the grave copper and iron salts are released (copper in particular will inhibit microbiological attack, allowing the textile to be preserved in the immediate vicinity of the metal). Sometimes the metal salts will also form a hollow cast of the textile as it deteriorates (particularly more common on iron as in this case of iron buckles in Varangéville) or they may impregnate it and produce a rigid fascimile of the original. The process is known as "mineralisation" and the textiles are termed "mineralised", "mineral-replaced" or "pseudomorphs", see Jakes K.A., Sibley L.R., "Survival of cellulosic fibres in the archaeological context," *Science and Archaeology* 25 (1983), pp. 31- 38; Janaway R., "Textile fibre characteristics preserved by metal corrosion: the potential of SEM studies," *The Conservator* 7 (1983), pp. 48- 52, esp. 48-49.

⁴⁸⁰ Salin E., France-Lanord A., "Traditions et art mérovingiens. I. Le cimetière de Varangéville (Meurthe-et-Moselle)," *Gallia* 4 (1946), pp. 199-289.

⁴⁸¹ See Textile Terms and Procedures (Appendix III).

more layers of textile at the back, of a fine linen twill of z/z, 2/2 diamond pattern fabric, which was medium coarse (16/16 counts/cm). The additional twill linen at the front, covering the bleached textile, was impossible to analyse. The first linen bleached and pleated textile covered the buckle back and front because it was also pleated in two and hiding the buckle, as the pleat was caught between the leather strap and the iron plate.

The woman was dressed in a gown of bleached fine tabby linen that formed a deliberate fold over the buckle and dropped in folds over the chest; it was tucked in and held at the waist by a buckled leather belt. The belt was covered by the fold of the upper part of the gown. This had caught and made a hole at the back of the buckle between the leather strap and the plaque-buckle. The gown and buckle were covered entirely by the two linen twills which could have come from a linen twill overdress, probably quite wide, and a veil closed and pinned at the chest by the bronze pin which reached at least to the level of the waist. The possibility of a shroud seems unlikely, as the orientation of the metalwork and the pleats suggest a fully dressed burial in the clothes the woman wore in life. Burial 16 was dated by the finds to the second half of the 7th century, a little before dressed burials died out: women still wore leather belts with buckles over linen gowns, and the shape of the garment in this instance seems to have been more important than the decoration of the belt, which was covered; a point also made for other burials, especially Anglo-Saxon ones, where more textile finds are preserved, is that the *chatelaines* were sometimes worn under the overdress, between the overdress and the undergown.⁴⁸²

The same linen fabrics of the same two types were found in 5 more pieces in nearby inhumations. The textiles in Varangéville were all made of linen of medium to fine quality, and possibly two specimens of canvas were evidenced as well; the coarser linen fabric was found in two other graves,⁴⁸³ probably from cloaks or lining with some leather remains (grave 2 of a man, grave 15 of a woman). The 7 finds of three piece-sets of damascened plaque-buckles belonged to men from the “richest” burials in Varangéville who had metallic distributors and metallic knife sheaths. These all are characteristic of local North Frankish workshops of the middle of the 7th century and were found in the more richly furnished graves, mostly of the middle of the 7th century

⁴⁸² See the remarks on the way the overdress -a *peplos* in that instance was worn in Wakerley, Northants in pp. 289-290, and compare with other similar garments in note 526.

⁴⁸³ See fig 3.31.

phase of the cemetery. There were five types of textiles of simple patterns and characteristic North Frankish z/z spin direction which must have been produced locally, in contrast to the most elaborate damascened metalwork pieces which were made elsewhere. The main difference between the five types of local textile evidenced was in the tightness of the weave, which is a personal or occasional vestimentary requirement and in the quality of the thread counts. All were woven in a balanced pick ratio, easy to weave on any type of vertical loom. The laboratory did not check for dyes in the original publication, but it was possible to attest that the linen of the dress of the woman in grave 16 had been bleached with a vegetable material and ashes.⁴⁸⁴

More men than women (12/7) had been inhumed on the site and there are also 15 unsexed burials. It is notable that all of these 34 burials were furnished with buckles. The children were either absent or among the 3 disturbed burials. Out of a total of 12 men buried between 600 and 650, all had scramasaxes and large damascened or embossed and incised bronze buckle sets and one of them belt-fittings with inlaid iron in the baldric decoration. One of them had also vestiges of leather clothing adhering to the back of the buckle and metal studs, as the woman in grave 15 at the pin at the chest, probably from a leather cloak. Of the 7 women, 3 wore a triangular buckle set, in the way of the woman in grave 16 of the early 7th century, with incised decoration. Other burials were much more elaborate than grave 16, which was one of the latest burials before the abandonment of the site and had only the plain buckle, the large pin and a few clay beads. These were the main types of buckles worn at Varangéville. Another woman had only a bead and a vase (grave 7). It is the men and especially the five men having both scramasaxes and purse mounts, probably buried in the middle of 7th century, who wore the most elaborate and showy items: also, two unsexed skeletons, probably belonging to adolescents, wore triangular mid-7th century belts. In grave 9, of a woman with the most elaborate buckle set and strap ends, the iron cover of a book, probably a gospel, or liturgical text was found at her head. The placing of a buckle or a metallic object or book-cover at the head is a seemingly curious practice that happens at the intermediate periods between a change

⁴⁸⁴ It could be burnt lime and plant ash, also in Britain wake robin is said to help bleaching (see Walton-Rogers, *op.cit.*, note 322, p. 36).

in customs, especially at the very beginning and also at the end of the period of the furnished burials.⁴⁸⁵

Varangéville was the resting place of a small rural community in the Lorraine region: its members were dressed in their clothes, probably made in the settlement, comprising in our specimens two to three different textiles for a person's change of clothes, and also made of leather for some men and women; most people were accompanied by biconical pots;⁴⁸⁶ the presence of arms for all the men and at least five baldrics for some of them is a striking feature of a militarised rural settlement, as also is the over 2/1 ratio of men to women found buried there. Grave 16 is one of the poorest graves, but is richer than the others in information, because we manage to get an idea of the main linen gown and the way it was preferred to be worn by this person thanks to the evidence caught at the leather strap and buckle plate.

We do not know much about the length or the width of the garments in Merovingian Lorraine, or the seams and the decoration, apart from the fact that the fabric was deliberately pleated, bleached and folded. In all probability the gown was either cut to shape and seamed as a tunic without a frontal opening, pleated with stitches at the seam of the frontal piece at neck and shoulders,⁴⁸⁷ falling over the waist as a blouse and covering the belt; or it could have resembled a tubular *peplos* gown worn without the pins and the brooches and simply stitched at the shoulders. The fact that not one single brooch or a *fibula* was found even in the older female graves in Varangéville seems to support the case of the tunic.⁴⁸⁸ The diagnostic element of the *peplos* is usually a pair or two pairs

⁴⁸⁵ See infra section 3.10 notes 559, 560, on the Grave 20 of a man probably called Tonancius, one of the first furnished inhumation burials in the "Burgundian" section of the Gallo-Roman and "Burgundian" cemetery of Monnet-la-Ville.

⁴⁸⁶ According to Collardelle, op.cit., note 53, p. 160 only in extremely rare cases there is organic residue in the pottery grave goods, the pots could contain holy water and burnt wood for protection against human disturbance of the grave and demons. Although it may originate in pagan times it was an established Christian custom and as it is evidenced in gallo-roman burials with a continuation into medieval times as well (from late Roman Rhineland to Burgundy and Spain), it expresses an unbroken tradition from the Christian late antiquity.

⁴⁸⁷ Compare with the pleated front worn at the end of the same century at the Genoels-Elderen Diptych dress. See fig 3.17.

⁴⁸⁸ In the Moselle area even at the small cemeteries like the one of Vigneulles-les-Hattonchâtel with 22 burials, at least one of the women wore a round brooch, a tinned bronze buckle and a pin, see Billoret R., "Informations Archéologiques, Circonscription de Lorraine, Vigneulles-les-Hattonchâtel," *Gallia* 32 (1974), p. 348. The only instance in this vicinity, in central Austrasia, Moselle, where there is not a single brooch found in the entire cemetery is Ennery, see Delort E., "Le cimetière franc d' Ennery," *Gallia* 5 (1947), pp. 351-403, where throughout the 6th century some of the women wear earrings, a pin and a comb

of brooches worn at the shoulders and neck, and this is absent from the earlier graves in Varangéville. In other cemeteries in the Moselle area, women wore a buckled leather belt and at least one radiated headed long brooch, or a round brooch to fasten the cloak or veil at the neck or to close a front opening of a tunic gown.⁴⁸⁹

At the beginning of the 7th century, the *peplos* does not seem to have been worn in Lorraine.⁴⁹⁰ Earlier, in the 6th century, in some cemeteries as in Vron (Somme) and Neuville-sur-Escout in Flanders, at least one iron buckle and a knife hanging from the leather strap, and at times two or more strap-ends and a pair of long brooches or disc brooches, were worn near the neck or at the shoulders in the *peplos* style and these were the full kit worn by adult privileged women.⁴⁹¹ The difference in the costume evidenced between the cemeteries in the diocese of Metz⁴⁹² in the 6th and 7th century as shown in our case study, and Vron and Neuville-sur-Escout and also Frénouville in Normandy could perhaps mark out the Frisian population - and possibly Saxon in Vron and Frénouville - from the Franks. To this can be added the consistent similarities in original traits recurrent in these distinct cemeteries in the way a girdle was worn; pinning the girdle at four or five places by four or five brooches on the *peplos* gown (mostly z/s 2/1 or 3/1 twill fine woolen textiles) and at the same time securing by the brooches at the waist a cloak or a veil as it cropped up throughout the 6th century phases in Vron, Frénouville - and also in Cleatham, Humberside.⁴⁹³ It seems that a certain regional trait or

at the head, and of course an iron or bronze buckle and shoe buckles. The ratio there is also 26 men to 3 women but the large number (17) of the unsexed skeletons suggests that the gender bias is not what it seems. Perhaps only these women were adults or could afford these objects as is perhaps the case in Varangéville. These could have been relatively "poor" cemeteries or custom, fashion, religious reasons or the social situation of the women did not permit big showy items on dress.

⁴⁸⁹ See Appendix II, Austrasian-Rhineland sites.

⁴⁹⁰ See the comparative analysis of the artefact and gender and age ratio in a number of cemeteries having these characteristics in the late 6th and early 7th centuries, especially around the diocese of Metz, Meurthe, Saar, Pfalz-Kreis (Berthelming, Bettborn, Bouzonville, Hayange, Walsheim, Wittersheim, Audun-le-Tiche, Chaouilley, Lavoye, Villey-St-Etienne). See Halsall G., "Female status and power in early Merovingian central Austrasia: the burial evidence," *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1) (1996), pp. 1-24.

⁴⁹¹ As also in Abainville and other cemeteries in the same area (Billoret, R., "Abainville", "Montenach "Heudincourt," *Gallia* 32 (1974), pp. 341-357), Thin-le-Montier (Frézouls E., "Thin-le-Montier," *Gallia* 33 (1975), pp. 390-392; Vron, (Seillier C., Gosselin J.Y., Piton, D., "Caractères Généraux de la Nécropole de Vron," *Septentrion* 3 (1973), pp. 66-70; Neuville-sur-Escout, (Hantute G., "Le cimetière mérovingien de Neuville-sur-Escout," *Septentrion* 13 (1992), pp. 32-106).

⁴⁹² See Halsall, op.cit., note 490, especially p. 10-12 in the way he is establishing gender associations between grave-goods in two very obviously artefactually different phases in the same vicinity.

⁴⁹³ See Coatsworth E., Fitzgerald M., Leahy K., Owen-Crocker G., "Anglo-Saxon Textiles from Cleatham, Humberside," *Textile History* 27 (1) (1996), pp. 5-41; Pilet C., Lemièrre J., Buchet L., *La*

ethnic provenance was highlighted there, but there is no continuation in the next phases of the cemeteries, which may be a sign of acculturation.

Chatelaines, evidenced only in grave 15 in Varangéville, of a woman with three iron rings at the femurs, become more common among the élites after the end of the 6th century in the Meuse area and especially across the Scheldt; the earliest elaborate chatelaines bear pendant crosses or incised and encrusted gem cross decoration, and are found in the cemeteries of Frachimont, Beerlegem and Tournai, but these are reserved for one or two graves per site; the rest of the women wore the version of a few iron rings hung from a cord or strap like the woman in Varangéville.⁴⁹⁴ It seems that the chatelaine fashion originates from this area in the last decades of the 6th century and it spread in the 7th century across East and West Francia and on both sides of the Channel.⁴⁹⁵ There are no girdle hangers or redundant large rings in the known Burgundian cemeteries and they are also very rarely encountered in the known sites in the South –West.⁴⁹⁶

Around the early 7th century the pairs of brooches worn at the shoulders in the Somme and Flanders as at Harmignies⁴⁹⁷ moved lower down the body, perhaps to fasten an open front garment rather than a tunic, while a central brooch remained at the chest as

Nécropole de Frénouville (Calvados), (Rouen, 1975), p. 13, Grave 598; Seiller C.L., Gosselin J.Y., Piton D., “Caractères généraux de la nécropole de Vron (Somme),” *Septentrion* 3 (1973), pp. 66-70. See Sépultures 99, 121 A, 43/ 32 A, 269/A.

⁴⁹⁴ See the buckles of the chatelaines from the middle to the late 6th century at Wellin, Franchimont-Colline du Tombeau, Torgny, Beerlegem, Tournai, in Roosens H., “Reflets de Christianisation dans les cimetières mérovingiennes,” *Les Études Classiques* 53 (1985), pp. 11-35, esp. figs 2, 3, 4 and Dierkens A., *Les deux cimetières de Franchimont*, (Namur, 1981), esp. fig 21 for the chatelaine with the pendant crosses. See also Beerlegem, an early 7th century site characterised by the excavators “poor in finds” except for the iron buckles, scissors, iron rings and a high ratio of scamasaxes and axes apart from the three graves 111, 122, 123 that were very rich with damascened five-piece sets of buckles and scabbards with iron rings and strap ends, (Roosens H., Van Doorselaer A., “Enkele merkwaardige gravenvindstenen uit Merovingische begraafplaats van Beerlegem,” *Archaeologia Belgica* 91 (1966), pp. 26-43). See Beerlegem in Appendix II.

⁴⁹⁵ See chatelaines with amulets in Rhineland in Grave 5 dated to the second half of the 7th century in Ubstadt-Weiher (Kr. Karlsruhe) a grave excavated in 1972, of the 2nd half of the 7th century exhibited at the Mannheim Reiss-Museum, *Die Franken wegbereiter Europas*, (Mainz, 1996), p. 1028. See fig 3.32.

⁴⁹⁶ According to the burgundian material in the survey of Collardelle M., *Sépulture et traditions funéraires du V au XIIIe siècle ap. J.C., Dans les Campagnes des Alpes Françaises du Nord*, Société Alpine de documentation et de recherche en archéologie Historique, CNRS, (Grenoble, 1983), and James E., *The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul*, BAR Suppl. Ser. 25, (Oxford, 1977), and the few published sites in Languedoc, as in the three early medieval cemeteries at Lunel-Viel See Garnotel A., Raynaud C., “Groupés or dispersés ? Les morts et la société rurale en Languedoc oriental (IVe-XIIe siècles),” in *Archéologie du cimetière Chretien, Actes du 2^e colloque A.R..C.H. E. A.*, (Tours, 1996), pp. 139-153.

⁴⁹⁷ Vanhaecke L., Verheeken-Lammens, C., “Textile Pseudomorphs from a Merovingian Burial Ground at Harmignies, Belgium,” in Pritchard I., Wild J.P.(eds.), *Northern Archaeological Textiles Symposium, (NESAT VIII)*, Oxford, (Oxford, 2005), pp. 22-28.

had been the overall central Austrasian fashion. The pair of the long brooches or the saucer type at the shoulders accompanying the *peplos* could be found in much earlier burials of the late 5th to early 6th century in the Rhineland; and sometimes, as in Selzen, Hesse, a pair of long radiated headed brooches may have fastened the open side flaps of a *peplos* held at the waist with a thin strap and a buckle on the undergarment at the sides of the skirt.⁴⁹⁸ This was a late 5th -early 6th East Frankish fashion and was not evidenced in Central Austrasia, from what we have seen so far. In the middle of the 6th and until the end of the century, in parts of Francia west of the Rhine and some parts of Neustria, there is evidence for a coat worn over an open-front tunic which closed by a number of round or bow brooches worn vertically, crossways or horizontally.⁴⁹⁹ This coat is belted with a buckle set at the waist which becomes larger at the end of the 6th century, and is nielloed and engraved or triangular in the North. The same buckle appears also in the “Burgundian” cemeteries in the Drôme, Isère and Haute Savoie regions, and is embossed in Aquitaine, although in these last regions it was not worn with the four-brooch overcoat but found with a pin or one smaller brooch at the chest.⁵⁰⁰ A belt strap with a large rectangular buckle, produced locally, therefore could be worn in different regions in the same way but with garments possibly of a different cut.

In the burials in Neustria and the Rhineland, the brooches are found between the femurs as a fastening to an open jacket⁵⁰¹ - or a coat in the Rhineland - throughout the 6th century.⁵⁰² If a belt is worn, the fastening elements catch the skirt; if it is not fastened at

⁴⁹⁸ See James E., *The Franks*, (Oxford, 1991), p. 21, fig 3.33.

⁴⁹⁹ See infra notes 501, 503.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf Collardelle, op.cit., note 496, pp. 360-382.

⁵⁰¹ As possibly was the fashion of the East Franks throughout the 6th century. See the female grave 139 in Westhofen, the fastening of the vertical open front of the long jacket worn under a cloak, Mannheim Reiss-Museum, *Die Franken wegbereiter Europas*, (Mainz, 1996), p. 675.

⁵⁰² See Böhme H.W., “Les Thuringiens dans le Nord du Royaume Franc,” *Revue Archéologique de Picardie* 3 (4) (1988), pp. 57-69 and Walton-Rogers P., *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England*, (York, 2007), pp. 191-193, suggest that this four-brooch costume was worn by Franks and Gepids, Alamans and Goths and that it spread throughout Europe during the incursions of the Huns and associated tribes into France in the late 5th century, as evidenced in a number of very rich female burials with the four brooch costume in Normandy (Pilet C., *La Nécropole de Saint- Martin-de-Fontenay, Calvados*, (Paris, 1994), pp. 96-111 and Kazanski M., “Deux riches tombes de l’ époque des grands invasions au nord de la Gaule (Airan et Pouan),” *Archéologie médiévale* 12 (1982), pp. 17-39). This explanation of the origins of the costume in the Danube and Black Sea regions seems very probable but the dissemination these authors suggest seems unfounded and overgeneralising. I disagree that this was worn through much of merovingian Europe, as it was never worn in central Austrasia, most parts and for most people in Central Francia, and almost never in Burgundy and the South. The finds show that it was worn for a long time in the 6th century in Rhineland, in parts of Neustria, in Jutland and in Kent.

the waist, as in the case of the overcoat of the “Arnegundis ring” individual, and in most Rhineland examples, the brooches fasten the open front at chest and waist.⁵⁰³ The evidence for bow-brooches pinning the two sides of surviving frontal selvages of a tabby woolen garment exist in female grave 105 of the late 6th century at Waging am See, Trausheim, Oberbayern, as also in a number of cases in Kent.⁵⁰⁴

In the first half of the 7th century more cemeteries in the vicinity of Varangéville shared the same characteristics of a rise in numbers of armed burials.⁵⁰⁵ The types of belts worn there differ from the ones used in the late 6th century. They became bigger and more showy, damascened, nielloed or triangular buckle-sets for the men, while women retain the necklace, the round brooch, sometimes of silver, the bronze pin at the chest which in all probability closed the opening of a tunic and fastened the cloak or veil, and wore iron girdle rings, suggestive of girdles, smaller buckles, rectangular buckles like the one in grave 16, thinner leather straps and a few chatelaines, that could be simple functional rings or as elaborate as in Merovingian Flanders according to their status and age, because these are usually worn after adolescence and by mature adults of a certain status.⁵⁰⁶

On the basis of a comparison between what we know about the garments worn in the Austrasian part of Northern Francia at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th

⁵⁰³ See the placing and orientation of the small round brooches worn at the chest of the burial 49, Appendix I, n° 15, in Saint-Denis, Paris. (Salin É., “Sépultures Gallo-romaines et Mérovingiennes dans la basilique de Saint-Denis,” *Monuments et Mémoires, Fondation Eugène Piot* 49 (1957), pp. 93-128).

Max Martin has supported that short bow brooches worn crossways at waist level are found at the west of the Rhine while the placing of the brooches vertically or diagonally is common in the rest of Frankish areas but he does not comprise in this analysis the existence or absence of the belt which I think is the criterion and explains the variety on a functional rather than the regional costume basis. See Martin M., “Tradition und Wandel der Fibelschmückten frühmittelalterlichen Frauenkleidung,” *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums* 38 (1991), pp. 629-680.

⁵⁰⁴ Bartel A., Knöchlein R., “Zu einem Frauengrab des sechsten Jahrhunderts aus Waging am See, Lkr Traunstein, Oberbayern,” *Germania* 71 (1993), pp. 419-439, fig 14, see fig 3.34. For the 6 Kentish known cases from Dover Buckland II. See Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, p. 192.

⁵⁰⁵ See Appendix II, Central Austrasia and Lorraine sites.

⁵⁰⁶ For the early to middle of the 7th century in Austrasia, for characteristic cemeteries with round-plate plaques-boucles and chatelaines and scissors, see Billoret R., “Informations Archéologiques: “Bislée,” *Gallia* 32 (1974), pp. 34 ; Audun-le-Tiche, see Simmer A., “La nécropole mérovingienne d’Audun-le-Tiche,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 35 (1978), pp. 31-40; Neuville-sur-Escaut, see Hantute G., “Le cimetière mérovingien de Neuville-sur-Escaut,” *Septentrion* 13 (1992), pp. 32-106. Also see Appendix II for some age facts in Austrasia.

century and those from other burial contexts north of the Loire,⁵⁰⁷ it is possible to suggest that the skirt of a belted tunic certainly covered the knees. Another point is that the tubular *peplos* gown, if it had ever been worn in this area, had been abandoned already in the 5th century. It was however still worn in the lands of the Alamanni, and perhaps the East Franks, until the middle of the 6th century, and certainly the Old Saxons⁵⁰⁸ after the middle of the 6th century and until the early 7th. The *peplos* gown also saw a prolonged revival in the Saxon and Anglian regions of Britain from the late 5th to the end of the 6th centuries.⁵⁰⁹ In Harmignies, Hainault, the Thuringian provenance of the leading founding family is underlined by the Thuringian pottery accompanying their members and also by the use of the *peplos* gown, with brooches at the shoulders for at least two generations that mark them out from the rest of the community.⁵¹⁰ This is one of the cases where conservatism in costume, rather than being fashionable, probably by following the fashion in line with a royal court, is evident for a local élite family; a slow rate of acculturation can also be demonstrated here.

As we discussed previously, in Neustria and in the Rhineland, after the *peplos* gown was abandoned, especially in the urban centres, versions of a longer or a knee-length linen or woolen overcoat over a linen inner tunic with a vertical opening was evidenced for the élites, and even silk for the more comfortable social strata around 530-590.⁵¹¹ This was perhaps a regional cultural trait and the reflection of the dominant Merovingian court culture in the four main royal capitals, one which reached Kent as well.⁵¹² In this case, in contrast to the regional conservatism of non-indigenous élites as in the Harmignies community, status in female dress, at least, was expressed by vestimentary affiliations and conformity to what was fashionable according to the

⁵⁰⁷ As in the Perusson, Upper Loire female grave, see discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 92-93, notes 65, 103, fig 2.1abcd, the length of all garments-at least five items- stop at the knee, the élite burial is dated to 580-90, see Lelong C., "Sépulture mérovingienne de Perusson (Indre-et-Loire)," *Archéologie médiévale* 6 (1976), pp. 219-231. Also see the burials at Audun-le-Tiche, Lorraine (Appendix II) where the women have textiles at least at knee level as evidenced by the chatelaine groups behind their legs and the cross-garters when found buried in the crouched position.

⁵⁰⁸ See Martin M., note 503, and also Vierck H., *Religion, Rang und Herrschaft im Spiegel der Tracht*, in Ahrens C., (ed.), *Sachsen und Angelsachsen*, (Hamburg, 1979), pp. 271-83.

⁵⁰⁹ Owen- Crocker, Walton-Rogers and Anglo-Saxon sites in Appendix II.

⁵¹⁰ See Chapter 2, note 182.

⁵¹¹ See Appendix II., Köln, Selzen, Waging am See, Airan, Pouan, Paris, Saint-Denis, "Arnegundis" burial with a dark purple silk manteau with gold-embroidered cuffs covering a red tunic and a linen underdress, Chessel Down, Dover Buckland.

⁵¹² See notes 502, 503.

dictates of the royal Frankish cultural centres. In other areas in Neustria like Marolles-sur-Seine and Paley, in the 6th century only one *fibula* was usually found on the upper chest with a large plaque-buckle, as was the norm in Central Austrasia,⁵¹³ suggesting that a tunic with a front opening was worn throughout most of the 6th century by most people in Neustria as well; this was perhaps the shape of the three silk dresses of the Lady of Perusson buried in the 590's.⁵¹⁴

Another parallel of dress evidence caught at the waist in a woman's grave is from the cemetery of Estagel in the eastern Pyrenées which was in use from the early 6th to the middle of the 7th century.⁵¹⁵ The burials that yielded metalwork and oxydised textiles were dated by the ample evidence of accessories of large multicoloured cloisonné rectangular buckle plates worn around the middle of the 6th century. Out of a total of 112 inhumations, only 59 burials were furnished. These were dug in rows of individual and multiple secondary burials covering a span of over 80-100 years. As in Varangéville, all the 22 women with grave goods wore bronze buckles, and 13 out of the 14 male burials had buckles too. The ratio between gender and grave goods - buckles mostly - is as follows: 22/31 women, 14/17 men, and 5/22 children under 12, while the rest were either disturbed burials or individuals of undeterminable sex. 12 of the female graves, more than half of the furnished female burials, were very well furnished with the full kit of a buckle with a cloisonné buckle plate with glass multicoloured enamel (two had tinned bronze buckle sets with embossed and engraved decoration),⁵¹⁶ a pair of radiated headed brooches at the shoulders, with point upwards and head towards the pelvis, and six out of them had also purse mounts, a string of beads hung between the brooches, and earrings, cross garter buckles, and additionally a pin at the chest.

⁵¹³ See Appendix II, Marolles-sur-Seine, Paley.

⁵¹⁴ See Chapter 2, notes 65, 103.

⁵¹⁵ Lantier M., "Le cimetière wisigothique d'Estagel," *Gallia* 7 (1947), pp. 55-80. The site was occupied in Gallo-roman times but the cemetery or the gallo-roman settlement have been attested but for some Late Roman artifacts in a few graves.

⁵¹⁶ Type A11 and A12 of rectangular Aquitaine type buckle plate with 5 and 8 bosses, according to the typology proposed by Lerenter S., "Nouvelle approche typologique des plaques-buckles mérovingiens en bronze en type Aquitain", in Périn, P., (ed.), *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne*, (Rouen, 1991), pp. 225-235. There is a striking similarity between the plaque-buckles worn by a dozen of these women and the objects recovered at Herrera de Pisuergra, Carpio de Tajo, Castiltierra. See infra note 522.

The richest graves were of two women, and both preserved textiles, grave 1, which also had a long bronze pin at the right temple and a bone button near the buckle plate, suggesting that a cloak or a veil was worn on top of the ensemble, and grave 78, which had all the previous and in addition gold foil strip at the string of beads on the chest. Nine of the women with the “poorer” furnishings had only a simple bronze buckle, and one of them an iron ring testifying to the presense of woven girdles or cords or chatelaines. It is not probable that these women belonged to a later phase of the cemetery, expressing a change in fashion, as a study of the plan of the site⁵¹⁷ and the plotting out of the data suggests that the richest burials of women and men were mostly individual graves and had an equal spatial distribution covering all the rows of graves in Estagel; individuals in double burials were couples, both furnished or unfurnished to a remarkably consistent/equal degree (with one exception in grave 80).⁵¹⁸ The associative relationships between the burials with women with ostentatious metalwork and buckle-plates and the other graves, and with the successive burials, shows that these were placed as focal points near satellite burials of children, women and men with few or no grave goods or just a plain buckle. It seems that most grave goods were clustered among three or four family groups all over the site and that the richest graves of women formed part of a select group signifying vertical social differentiation, in the same phase of the site.

The homogeneity within the two groups of women’s graves was not matched by the 14 burials belonging to men. 10 out of the 14 men wore a plain iron buckle. Nevertheless, the most valuable items were in very few male graves positioned near the main three foci: the only silver plaque-buckle on the site belonged to a man (grave 10) near the rich female graves 1, 7, 8, 9. Two men in graves 37 and 47 had purse mounts and bronze belt fittings. It is striking that in a site which yielded so much metalwork of high quality, no arms were found but a few knives in men’s graves only. Equally striking is the absence of pottery, but there are three coloured glass flasks in the markedly privileged female graves 1, 8, 32, 62, 78, 84. Although costly belt items were in three men’s graves, the most ostentatious plaque-buckles were in female graves. The skeletons were too

⁵¹⁷ See Lantier, *op.cit.*, note 515, plan of Estagel, p. 12. See fig 3.35, plan of Estagel.

⁵¹⁸ In this double burial the man had four knives with silver decorated sheaths under his left shoulderblade mounted on a baldric with studs, three bronze distributors and three buckles. The woman had only one small iron buckle and a one larger of bronze, *ibidem*, note 517, p. 171.

damaged to allow further examination,⁵¹⁹ so we lack an age assessment that would combine the age and gender dimensions to the textile types which were found in graves 1, 23, 48, 84, 62, 78, a rare exception of conservation for the South of Gaul; all the same, unique evidence is gained about the way the buckle was worn with the *peplos* which it seems that at least the most well furnished of these women wore:⁵²⁰

In graves 62, 78, 84 there was a layer of a fine, pleated textile over the front of the pin of the buckle-plate while the back of the plate had imprints of a coarser fabric, probably wool. There is evidence for a smoothly spun gown, pinned at the shoulders with bow brooches, head towards the pelvis and the point towards the shoulder,⁵²¹ and another layer on top of a plate-buckle in grave 78 from a fabric with pleats, probably a veil caught with a pin at the chest over the beads strung between the brooches. We know nothing of the details of the sleeves, but the smoothness of the fabric from the gown suggests that it was pulled down straight under the leather belt, unlike the garment in Varangéville. There, as well as in Estagel, there was no evidence for shrouds.

The bronze plate-buckles of the belts have parallels in similar sites over both sides of the Pyrenées⁵²² with abundant metalwork, that stands out between the sarcophagi burials without such furnishings which are the usual feature of this area.⁵²³ These sites are characterised on the evidence of these belts as Visigothic. A very ostentatious female dress was worn in these sites, as in Estagel. The metallic elements, the earrings and the very prominent and multicoloured buckle plates dated to 525-560, was a type more than half of the women in the settlement could afford - the mothers of the households,

⁵¹⁹ See note 515, *ibidem*, p. 180.

⁵²⁰ It is very probable that all the women wore the tubular *peplos* gown just stitched at the shoulders or caught with a wooden or bone pin now gone. In the richer graves there is tangible evidence of the construction of the garment because these wore *fibulae* found *in situ* still pinning the back to the front of the gown at the shoulder.

⁵²¹ Exactly in the way Stilicho wore the *fibula* in the ivory diptych of c 400, Museo del Duomo, Milan, see fig 3.36. (After Walton-Rogers, p. 202).

⁵²² As in Herrera de Pisuerga, Azuqueca, Castil Tierra, Carpio de Tajo, Loupian, Servian (Hérault), Le Moulin d' Ambre, Giroussens (Tarn), Avéze (Gard). See Ripoll Lopez G., "Materiales Funerarios de la Hispania Visigoda: Problemas de Cronología y Tipología", in Périn P., (ed.), *Gallo-Romains, Wisigoths et Francs en Aquitaine, Septimanie et Espagne*, (Rouen, 1991), pp. 111-120.

⁵²³ See the cemetery Des Horts at Lunel-Viel, and the sporadic nature of furnished burials in the South of Gaul Garnotel A., Raynaud C., "Groupés or dispersés ? Les morts et la société rurale en Languedoc oriental (IVe-XIIe siècles) ", in *Archéologie du cimetière Chrétien, Actes du 2^e colloque A.R.C.H. E. A.*, (Tours, 1996), pp. 139-153.

probably - and were worn in these communities.⁵²⁴ Some dimensions of a closely knit social fabric are revealed, in the context of which women had to or preferred to express explicitly their social and regional identity in a small agrarian rural community where every member had a clear-cut place over two or three generations. Estagel was abandoned in the 7th century; the community crossed the Pyrenées or more probably moved the cemetery closer to the still unidentified settlement.

The study of the *peplos* garment textiles in the Anglian site of Wakerley, Northamptonshire at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century comes in contrast to the less detailed study and treatment of the Estagel textiles;⁵²⁵ I will compare and fill in some information about the construction details, the sleeves and length of the widespread worn belted *peplos* from this well-recorded and -analysed case study. This will facilitate the understanding of the same type of garment as worn in Estagel and other rural communities in the Pyrenees and the early 6th century Rhineland, Thuringia and Saxony. In some parts of Northern Francia, and probably pockets in Normandy, Picardy, and (as we saw) in the Hainault region, Harmignies, the *peplos* was never popularised until probably the middle of the 6th century, but it was worn to serve less as a declaration of fashion than of vestimentary conservatism, alongside status and regionality for some of the privileged burials only. Evidence for the *peplos* in the same time-span is also very sporadically found in Burgundy.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ Compare with the Lombard cemetery of Castel Trosino where out of a total of 259 burials, 68 men, 106 women and 62 children; only 34 graves were furnished, 102 very poorly with a buckle or a pin and the rest 104 contained nothing but the bones. The most finds were found in a few burials with weapons and in 6 female graves which contained gold, leather and twin brooches at the shoulders probably wearing the *peplos*. In this case these are not the mothers of a household but the local top register family. See Mengarelli R., "La Necropoli Barbarica di Castel Trosino presso Ascoli Piceno," *Monumenti Antichi della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* XII (1902), pp. 146-379.

⁵²⁵ Crowfoot E., "The textiles" in Adams B., Jackson D., "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Wakerley, Northamptonshire," *Northamptonshire Archaeology* 22 (1989), pp. 69-178 and Owen-Crocker, op.cit., note 322, p. 38 for the analysis and the contextualised reconstruction of the grave plan. See fig. 3.37.

⁵²⁶ Apart from the early barbaric isolated princely burials of Airan, Pouan, Saint-Martin-de-Fontenay (See note 326) of the late 5th centuries, pairs of brooches and buckles were worn by some women in Frenouville. See Pilet C. et alii, *La Nécropole de Frénouville*, (Rouen, 1975) and Herouvillette in the 6th century. See Decaens J., "Un nouveau cimetière du haut moyen âge en Normandie, Herouvillette, (Calvados)," *Archéologie médiévale* 1 (1971), pp. 1-90. Also in the phases characterised as Saxon (mid 5th to the early 6th century) in Vron, see note 493, and also appearing as an élite fashion in Montenach, Neuville-sur-Escout, see note 491, discussion pp. 280-281; in one very important instance in Harmignies, Hainault, where the élite founding family graves were accompanied by Thuringian pottery vessels (Vanhaecke L., Verhecken-Lammens C., "Textile Pseudomorphs from a Merovingian Burial Ground at Harmignies, Belgium", in Pritchard I., Wild J.P.(eds.), *Northern Archaeological Textiles Symposium, (NESAT VIII)*,

In the Anglian site of Wakerley, the most information is revealed by the belt and its hangings and strap-ends of grave 74, of a woman aged between 35-45, who was found in a crouched position on her left side.⁵²⁷ She wore a large cruciform brooch on the upper chest, preserving two fabrics: z/z spun threads of a coarse 2/2 twill, probably wool, from a cloak, and under that a fairly coarse linen z/z spun 2/2 tabby woven hood or veil. The *peplos* was pinned at the right shoulder with a bronze small-long brooch, and at the left with a gilded saucer brooch. The gown was a fine z/z , 2/2 twill and there was a S-plied z spun string⁵²⁸ from which the scattered beads probably hung between the brooches. Along the pin of the saucer brooch, in the iron buckle, in the two strap ends and in the two bronze wrist clasps found in an horizontal line at the waist area in front of the body, were threads from a different z/s spun twill textile with warp and weft spun in different directions, a feature of patterned twills⁵²⁹ from a long tight-sleeved inner tunic.

The patterned twill of the inner gown was woven in a broken diamond or plain diamond twill, a luxury which is reported to have been sometimes imported,⁵³⁰ and it was probably displayed under a shorter *peplos* which could be caught up at the waist and tucked in the belt at the sides: the strap-ends and the metallic contents of a purse that hung from the belt, as well as a knife, preserved a bit of a tablet-woven braid that was either a caught-up selvedge of the *peplos* or the girdle of the inner gown, and also some

Oxford, (Oxford, 2005), pp. 22-28). The cases from Burgundy are incidental: one of the three very early “burgundian” incinerations in Monnet-la-Ville contained a pair of radiated head *fibulae* of the Rhineland type of the middle of the 5th century, see Collardelle, op.cit., note 496, p. 62 usually worn with the *peplos*, while by contrast the four *fibulae* found in this site out of a total of 185 burials (only 48 furnished) in Graves 2, 15, 98, 150, p. 58 were discoidal and made of plomb. At Annecy- Boutae there were two cases of S-type brooches worn in pairs at the shoulders (see Colardelle, ibidem, pp. 305-307), and six more cases at “Camolé des Mémoires” site, and a double burial with a man with weapons and a woman with *fibulae* at the shoulders. See Collardelle, ibidem, pp. 224-226. So this costume was worn very sporadically in Burgundy, while in pockets in Normandy and Flanders.

⁵²⁷ Cf Wakerley, Owen-Crocker, note 322, p. 38.

⁵²⁸ See Textile Terms and Procedures (Appendix III).

⁵²⁹ See Textile Terms and Procedures (Appendix III) for the patterned twill.

⁵³⁰ Walton -Rogers suggests on the basis of the evidence from the Anglo-Saxon textiles that the most probable textile imports were: 1. the fine spin -patterned Alamannic linens , as evidenced in the Aachen Dress of the Virgin, the Chelles Robe- 2. the wool diamond twills with standard pattern repeat as probably the inner tunic in Wakerley was, known also as *Rosettenköper* or rosette twill from Austrasia or Thuringia (there is great similarity between the specialist patterned twills in these two areas) 3. the *Rippenköper* or fluted twill usually found in Alamannic and Bavarian cemeteries in areas where according to Bender-Jørgensen, op.cit., note 322, pp. 77, 145 passim, the two-beam-loom was in use alongside the warp-weighted loom, and also another specialist textile product that was exported to Anglo-Saxon England, 4. the floating-warp-pattern textile again from Southern Germany. See Textile Terms and Procedures (Appendix III).

leather from the belt strap. It is possible that the belt equipment was carried between the patterned twill dress and the z/z twill gown. Threads preserved on these metal belt hangings, behind the legs of the body, suggest that the garments were at least knee-length.

It is very probable that the Estagel and Rhineland *peploi* were worn with long sleeved cut-to-shape tunics underneath,⁵³¹ tucked in the belt in a variety of ways, secured with girdles, and that the chatelaines worn also in the 6th century were not always visible. The other evidence for sleeves comes from the use of the *peplos* in Anglian sites, where a particular metallic element has preserved tablet-woven bands and sleeve selvages, the pair of the wrist-clasps.⁵³² The wrist-clasp is an Anglian feature which has only Scandinavian parallels and provenance (52% of women and 9% of men is the ratio of use in Anglian sites);⁵³³ in all probability, tablet-woven braids like the ones found at Chelles,⁵³⁴ or woven or embroidered selvages, could have been the Frankish or Visigothic equivalent to these clasps.⁵³⁵

Conversely we have to consider that another type of dress, worn at the same time, the belted tunic with the vertical opening at the neck, secured with the pin or one round or long brooch, was worn in the 6th and 7th century in Central Austrasia and perhaps in most parts of Burgundy, in Normandy, the Gallo-Roman South, and probably some of the less privileged or less fashionable strata in Neustria.⁵³⁶ Another Frankish alternative, popular after the first quarter of the 6th till at least the first quarter of the 7th centuries in areas of Neustria and in Alamannia as we saw previously, was the overcoat. I will compare what we know about this type and the belt worn with it in Francia with the well-researched and evidenced details of the overcoat worn with a girdle, belt or belt suite and most often with

⁵³¹ See the parallel of two tunics or overcoats with embroidered sleeves from Sutton Hoo Grave 9, Mound 14 (Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, p. 101) which can be compared to the Arnegundis ring individual overcoat with the golden embroidery at the sleeves, compare figs 3.38. and 2.2.

⁵³² See Walton-Rogers, ibidem, typology of wrist clasps from Anglian sites, pp. 122-123.

⁵³³ See Stoodley, op.cit., note 322, p. 33 as also the soumak woven with horse hair weft-wrapping wrist braids found in the wrist clasps, as in Snape, Suffolk, Grave 5; Snape, Grave 8; West Heslerton, North Yorkshire Grave 47, see Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, pp. 94-95.

⁵³⁴ See Laporte, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 167.

⁵³⁵ Quite complex tablet-woven braids were also found in Francia made with 50 tablets. See Chapter 2, pp. 115-118, and note 207 on braid dimensions (Chelles).

⁵³⁶ See Appendix II, Breny, Hordain, Audun-le-Tiche, Lavoye, Berthelming, Ennery; Frenouville, Herouvillette; La Balme, Roissard, St-Julien-en-Genevois, Monnet-la-Ville; Lunel-Viel (Les Horts); Paley, Marolles-sur-Seine.

a chatelaine over the open front tunic, which was the main variety of the dress styles adopted in Kent.⁵³⁷

Buckland I grave 92 is the burial of a Kentish woman in her mid-twenties who lived in the late 6th century.⁵³⁸ The oval loop of a buckle was found at the waist with the remains of three iron rings which preserved mineralised textile at the left of the pelvis from a broken diamond twill, probably produced locally. A small round disc gilt-silver brooch and an imported Frankish garnet brooch were found vertically, and were probably used as buttons to close a jacket. A string of beads was suspended from the top brooch, an element that was never encountered in occurrences of this type of costume in Francia, where the beads are always worn in a necklace around the neck. At graves 48, 1, 13 on the same site, locally produced simple linen tabby and twill weaves were secured with the top brooch.⁵³⁹ This suggests that a linen undergown was worn under a long coat overdress which could be made either of wool or linen. It is very possible, as we saw in the case of the “Arnegundis ring” individual, that this style was accompanied by a headveil as the evidence from the Kentish and Anglian cemeteries also suggests.⁵⁴⁰ The

⁵³⁷ On the “Kentish dress styles” over the late 5th to the late 7th centuries in Walton-Rogers, pp. 189-198. Also see fig 3.4. I think that these are basically variations on the same theme of a basic linen tunic with a frontal opening secured with small brooches over which a longer or shorter coat or jacket which I think was worn quite tight. This is because the pattern of both the two frontal pieces was cut from one length of cloth with the warp placed horizontally and the weft vertically to amplify the resilience of the frontal fabric of the jacket that was going to be buttoned or pinned closed. This could be worn with or without a belt and usually fastened with a number of square-headed, radiated headed or bow brooches usually at chest and waist with a full necklace around the neck as in Francia instead of the string of beads worn in Anglian and Saxon regions. (See fig 3.39 after Cook). In the middle of the 6th century this ensemble was worn as in the Buckland example; an inner linen tunic that was probably longer than the continental equivalent as there are no garter-belts around the knees in Kent, worn with a belt, fastened with two small brooches and a chatelaine, girdle hangings, crystal balls, spoons, amulet boxes etc. and a veil with a band. Finally at the beginning of the 7th century this coat gave way to an inner and an outer tunic without frontal opening as all the round brooches disappeared. The pin for the veil remained, while girdles, *Schleiergewebe* sashes and the chatelaines took the place of the belt with plate buckle-plus-chatelaine of the previous century and it seems that all the styles were homogenised by then into what was worn probably from the 6th century in central Austrasia, Burgundy, Southern France, Aquitaine and the Loire region: a long tunic with a brooch or a pin for the veil or cloak and a girdle or belt which survived into the Carolingian period.

⁵³⁸ See Owen-Crocker, op.cit., note 332, ibid, p. 101 with reconstruction and grave plan, see fig 3. 2c

⁵³⁹ See the comparison between the local textiles found at Buckland I and the textile finds at the Anglian cemetery of Morning Thorpe, Norfolk by Crowfoot E., “The textiles,” in Green B., Rogerson A., White S.G., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Morning Thorpe, Norfolk*, 1: Catalogue, East Anglian Archaeology Rep, 36.1 (1987), pp. 171-178.

⁵⁴⁰ See Chapter 2 on veils. Anglo-Saxon veils were evidenced in the same chronological horizon in the Anglian sites of West Heslerton, Grave 78, 123, 143; Scorton, Graves 4, 18, 80, 112, 98; Wakerley, Grave 80, Cleatham, Grave 24, Hartford Farm, Graves 1, 19, 22, 28; in the Holywell Row, Grave 37; in the Kentish sites of Mill Hill as we saw previously, in Grave 105; Buckland I, Graves 354, 391; Buckland II, Grave 250. (See the data base of Anglo-Saxon textiles, Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, pp. 49- 107).

general absence of shoe-buckles, and of cross-garters in Kentish burials, may suggest that the coat was worn longer there than on the Continent.⁵⁴¹ The types of belts and buckles worn with this style of dress in Kent were various, but belts with small buckles and chatelaines with strap-ends were the most usual finds.⁵⁴²

In Francia this type of dress could be accompanied by larger nielloed plate-buckles or with counter-plate and back-plate, in the late 6th century, before its vestiges in the material record are lost. A good proportion of iron rings were mostly found in North and Central Francia in the 7th century, and in Anglo-Saxon England of the Later Phase, as in the Saxon site of Winnall.⁵⁴³ There, a woman between 45-60, buried around the 750's, had worn at her thigh a heavy iron ring engraved in a meander pattern and carried a knife; these were probably suspended by a woven girdle. Earlier than that, in early 6th-century Marseille, Saint-Victor we have the evidence for an iron ring used as a stopper for the knot of a dark wool thin girdle.⁵⁴⁴ Both men and women wore girdles, and it is very possible that the hermits and monks, and the very poor, wore at times a braided cord, but the majority of the men mostly and at least half of the women were found with belt buckles in the varieties described above until after the middle of the 7th century when the furnished rite becomes rare. Although earlier in the 6th century in some localities girdles seem to have had a preponderance over the other types of belt -perhaps they were experts in tablet-weaving - as in 6th century Lavoye, just a few women were found with buckles at Chaouilley and Dieue-sur-Meuse, in contrast to Audun-Le-Tiche and the majority of cemeteries in the region. In the 7th century in some cemeteries both in the North and the Centre of Francia,⁵⁴⁵ as well as in most of Anglo-Saxon England, there is a decline in belt

⁵⁴¹ We can add to the discussion of length the parallel of the Perusson burial with its absence of structural metalwork elements on at least three silk tunics and the damascened imported silk cloak and veil; See Chapter 2, note 103 where the cross garter buckles were very clearly visible as all garments reached just below the knee, also in Köln, see Chapter 2, note 113, see figs 2.1abcd and 2.5ab. Another example of the length of garment in the Frankish burials is the female burial 7, n° 8 in Appendix I, at Saint-Denis with a gold quatrilobed long brooch at the chest, strap-ends and silver gilt- buckles over the ankles. It is possible that the dress and probably a coat over it was not worn ankle-length but probably calf-length. (Salin É., "Sépultures Gallo-romaines et Mérovingiennes dans la basilique de Saint-Denis," *Monuments et Mémoires, Fondation Eugène Piot* 49 (1957), pp. 93-128).

⁵⁴² See Appendix I and II, the Kentish sites.

⁵⁴³ Meaney A. L., Chadwick-Hawkes S., *Two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire*, (London, 1970), see in the middle of the 7th century phase, Grave 12 of a woman between 45-60, having with her a knife and a heavy iron ring .

⁵⁴⁴ See Boyer *et alii*, op.cit., note 76.

⁵⁴⁵ As in Harmignies Phase V, Vanhaeke, Verhecken, op.cit., Chapter 2, note 182, p. 23.

buckles in the 7th century for the women. Metal straps occur often in graves without buckles. The only surviving fabric girdles of the early middle ages, apart from the man's in Marseille and the bits of braids like the one at Wakerley, found in hanging objects in England ⁵⁴⁶ dated to the middle of the 6th century, are a number of *Schleiergewebe* net-like wool tabby veil weaves which were used for veils and sashes. These were found in Scorton, and West Heslerton in the 6th century and in Dover Buckland II grave 353 of the 7th century worn with hanging objects at thigh and knee, which means they were worn with a chatelaine.⁵⁴⁷ There are also the three tablet-woven braids in Chelles, associated with the relics of Balthild and Bertille, the dimensions of two of which make them probable candidates for girdles worn with the silk dresses of the saints.⁵⁴⁸ One of them is 125 cm long and 1,8 cm wide with a chevron pattern, and preserved vestiges of another additional tablet-woven border. The warp is yellow silk on a white linen ground. Another very elaborate composite braid with zoomorphic decoration (50 four-hole tablets were needed for its construction)⁵⁴⁹ is preserved in two pieces of length of 17 and 18 cm and 4 cm width. This last was found with the relics of Balthild and her brown silk dress, which makes probable that the other girdle was Bertille's, worn with the striped yellow-brown dress which had a tablet-woven hem made of the third braid.⁵⁵⁰ This is the most information we have for the dress and the girdles of late 7th- and early 8th-century women, because of the specific burial context where the successive translations and devotional care made their preservation possible.⁵⁵¹ The surviving girdles, in total, show that extra care was taken towards their construction and that they were probably more costly, and more elaborately made to make a contrast to the rest of the tunic or gown. Probably a elaborate tablet-woven girdle such as the ones worn at Chelles, with tags and hangings,

⁵⁴⁶ Cultural traits of non functional objects which could be rather symbolic worn around the waist or hung between the knees of women in Anglo-Saxon England comprising key hangers, latch-lifters, enigmatic girdle hangers in both the 6th and the 7th century (See Stoodley, note 322, for the qualitative and quantitative analysis analysis and the few deviant cases of men buried with these objects, passim and Walton-Rogers, note 322, pp. 134-135).

⁵⁴⁷ See Walton-Rogers, op.cit., note 322, pp. 134, and see ibid textile data base, pp. 68 (the Kentish sash was a z/z ?/ ? 14/8 or 9 counts per cm, a very fine wool tabby).

⁵⁴⁸ See Chapter 2, notes 206, 207, pp. 115-117, The third very long braid is preserved in 7 pieces in total length of 135 cm and width of 4 cm but it had stitched support onto the hem of another fabric, probably a dress. See figs fig 2.9a, compare with 2.10.

⁵⁴⁹ See Textile Terms and Procedures, Appendix III.

⁵⁵⁰ See Chapter 2, note 206, fig 2.10.

⁵⁵¹ See Chapter 2, notes 211, 214 on the translations of the relics of Chelles.

was no less visible or costly than a leather strap with a buckle set. Girdles displayed the same features as the belts and (as shown previously) had the same function as the belts: to give shape to the dress, to signal cultural, status and gender messages, and to hang the objects they needed to hang from.⁵⁵²

The circumstances of the uses of the belts and girdles in the examples discussed above, on the basis of the functional features of belts and girdles and the textiles adhering to them, presented an opportunity for a brief presentation of samples of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon textiles and also of the main shapes and cuts of the garments worn by women.⁵⁵³ The main features revealed here concerned three main types of belted gown and the associated overgown worn over a period of more than 150-180 years. The tunics, *peploi* and coats were worn for quite a while in certain regions and were closely related to the costume of certain ethnicities in specific localities. They could be made of linen or wool, and were found worn over a mostly linen undershirt, or dress and quite often with a linen veil.⁵⁵⁴ This costume, as the *peplos*, could become a signifier of status if it was conserved for longer as the costume of the some non-indigenous élites in contrast to local dress, as was evidenced in a few cases in Flanders or Normandy. It was still worn in most of Anglo-Saxon England, Septimania, Thuringia and Saxony throughout the 6th century, in spite of the fashions of the Frankish court or the main vestimentary norms of the tunic worn across the Rhine, and in Central, West and Southern Francia. A regional costume, such as the coat buttoned with vertical brooches, probably originally worn in the Rhineland in the early decades of the 6th century, was also the norm for Neustrian élites for more than half a century. Most women in Francia, including the élites, however wore a linen chemise and a linen or woollen tunic or an open-front tunic with the buckles, buckle-sets and girdles with their hangings described in the previous section.

⁵⁵² See pp. 270-275 in section 3.8 of this Chapter about the functions of the belts.

⁵⁵³ Compare with the discussion, section 3.8 p. 245 on the reasons why we know more about womens' dress than men's dress, and the bias of more metallic elements preserving textiles on them in Early Medieval women's dress.

⁵⁵⁴ See Chapter 2, discussion of the uses and meaning of the veil for what we can tell about early medieval societies in Conclusion, pp. 135-138.

It seems that fashion in the cut and shape of garments,⁵⁵⁵ at least to the extent one can conclude from the samples we have, moved far slower in the case of the dress than in the case of the belt accessories. In the previous section it was shown that in some localities fashion in belts and girdles could change twice within a generation. In the case of the *peploi*, the coats and tunics, as preserved on the belt accessories, this process was much more conservative. A reason for that could be that all three types of dress have different requirements as to the way the cloth was woven and the way the cloth was cut. The *peplos* was made on the loom, not cut on a person, so it kept its wide tubular shape as hung on a loom, probably the warp woven border serving as the selvages of the gown. If that was the case, the warp, the strongest spun yarn, ran vertically to the selvages. If this fabric was stretched tight on a body, it could be torn easily. By contrast, both the tunic and the coat were cut with scissors on fabric that was taken out of the loom and put on a tenter-board stretched on tenterhooks.⁵⁵⁶ The orientation of the two systems in cut-to-shape garments like these should always have the warp, the strongest yarn, running horizontally so as to withstand better the vertical tension and wear and tear of a garment with a number of cuts, seams and possibly gores or gussets. In the case of the tunic, the pattern could be cut so as to save as much as possible from a length of cloth. This meant that a tunic could be as wide or as tight-fitting as the wearer preferred. In the case of the coat, the back could take almost one length, but the front sides should take half a length each, with the warp system placed horizontally to withstand the tension of the buttons or the brooches. Given the possible dimensions of the Anglo-Saxon and the Frankish vertical looms, these lengths of cloth were not particularly wide.⁵⁵⁷ The tunic and the coat must not have been wide but close-fitting, in contrast to the folds of the *peplos*. All types of garment could have been around knee-length or full-length.

The whole concept of the construction, the technique and the realisation, of these garments show that each one belonged to different traditions of the cut and construction of clothes, and these were evidenced throughout the 6th century and for the first decades

⁵⁵⁵ In this analysis, the material evidence that we have is strongly biased towards women's dress for mostly reasons of preservation of textiles on the more numerous metallic elements of female dress, as presented above, see pp. 245.

⁵⁵⁶ See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures, it stretched usually to 1,00 - 1.20 - 1.50m wide the most.

⁵⁵⁷ See Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures.

of the 7th century. In the 7th century, the tunic was adopted widely. The vestimentary traditions were maintained in a conservative way in the 6th century, unlike weaving techniques, a shared group activity that in mobile groups can usually spread quite fast.⁵⁵⁸ The reasons for this were probably cultural, as these different concepts of the construction of dress did not survive within isolated regions or boundaries, e.g. Thuringia or Anglian and Saxon areas, but also in pockets as in Normandy and Burgundy, and this shows that the difference in shape of garment was determined by choice rather than by lack of technical skills. It is very probable that the cut and construction of the dress, and what gave shape to the gown of early medieval women, had a very important cultural significance and perhaps, alongside the regional type of belt, played the most important part in the visual imagery of regional and status identities of women in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England. In addition, as we saw in the previous section, if the women in an area appear to be less prominent than the men, it might be because the shape and cut of the garment was in itself another type of signifier and there was no need to signify status or regionality by an elaborate buckle set: a simple girdle or a plain buckle could be enough, as the visual messages could be transmitted in some areas more strongly than in others, by the cut of the dress and the accentuation in the waistline in a close fitting dress or overcoat. The body focus still remained on the waist area, all the same, even if the appearance of women was less prominent than that of men in North Francia: the shape of the dress could probably have transmitted as much information about regional, ethnic local origins and status as a buckle set.

⁵⁵⁸ As the example of the regionalised Z/ S spun twill shows in Anglo-Saxon England, which spread in most of England within a generation, or a few decades, see Walton-Rogers, note 322, pp. 234-235, "The transfer of textile technology."

3.10 Phylacteries, liminality and deviance

The values embodied in a buckle are nowhere to be seen more clearly than when this was deposited and not worn on the body; this is when the functional role gave way to the symbolic, and the belt as a sign became both the medium and the message. After the examination of the expression of gender and social distinctions in the structural axis and the functional characteristics and shape of early medieval dress, the symbolic and ideological aspects of the usage of belts will be explored here, through the organic remains adhering to them, and the inscriptions incised on them. In addition to that, a differentiation between the most crucial and prominent signifiers of the secular and the non secular vestimentary systems will be explored here.

Grave 20 in Monnet-la-Ville cemetery, near Saint-Maur, is dated in the late 5th century or the early 6th by means of an inscribed reliquary bronze plate buckle that was placed on the elbow of a male adult, one of the first Burgundian burials inserted between the phase of the Gallo-Roman burials.⁵⁵⁹ The inscription mentions a man named Tonancius and a man named Maxo who made the reliquary, and it runs around the rectangular frame with incised griffin decoration.⁵⁶⁰ The textile finds at the side of the buckle attest to the presence of a linen cloth over which the buckle was deposited. This seems to have been a shrouded burial and this reliquary was accompanying it. In Monnet-la-Ville the Gallo-Romans of the 5th century were buried dressed with a shroud as in the

⁵⁵⁹ Mercier C., Mercier M., *Le cimetière Burgonde de Monnet-la-Ville*, (Paris, 1974), p. 39. A knife was placed near the right femur of the man in burial number 20, an earthen “pillow” under his head. See figs of grave 20 and the radiography showing the hollow of the reliquary, the buckle and the inscription. See fig 3.40.

⁵⁶⁰ The inscription on the rectangular buckle plate can be transcribed as TONANCIUS VIVAS / D MAXO / ED FECIT MDIME / ? FECI D FACI DD and according to the paleographical table of the corpus of inscriptions of reliquaries in Burgundy in Treffort C., “Vertus prophylactiques et sens eschatologique d’ un dépôt funéraire du haut moyen Âge: les plaques-boucles rectangulaires burgondes à inscription,” *Archéologie médiévale* 32 (2002), pp. 31-55, esp. p. 42, see fig 3.41.

I suggest the following restitution: *Tonancius vivas (in) d(eo), Maxo me fecit optime, (arti)feci faci d(onum) d(omini)*. See also the corpus of parallels of the inscribed reliquaries from La Balme cemetery which mention the artisans Achuinus (Collardelle M., *Sépulture et traditions funéraires*, (Grenoble, 1983), p. 114); Landelinus at Ladoix-Sérigny (Deyts S., Rolley C., “Une plate buckle mérovingienne inscrit,” *Revue archéologique de l’ Est* 22 (3-4) (1971), p. 403-407); Willime at Yverdon, Alius at Yvoire, (unpublished, Treffort, p. 37); Siggiricus at Gondorf, (Werner J. “Die romanische Trachtprovinz Nord burgund im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert ”, in *9e Congrès de l’ Union internationale des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques, Nice, 13-18 sept 1976*, (Nice, 1977), pp. 228-253 and 324-332). For more buckles and inscriptions, from Burgundian contexts see figs 3.22, 3.23.

Marseille sarcophagus burials.⁵⁶¹ Grave 20 is one of the earliest burials of the “Burgundian phase” and inserted between the Gallo-Roman burials. Bronze buckles like the one deposited there are quite sizeable and the Tonancius buckle (length: 7.8 cm; height: 5.5 cm) is only one of the smallest examples. It could have been fixed on a leather strap with rivets, now broken. There is a receptacle at the back where cotton fibres were discovered, which justifies the traditional interpretation of these objects as reliquaries.⁵⁶²

In all probability buckles like this were made on order, with inscribed blessings usually in cryptographical abbreviations as in this one, and this is the first time that we encounter the name of the artisan and probably the name of the person who owned and wore the buckle in life. It is significant that this is the only inscribed reliquary in this cemetery of the 6th century where, out of a total of 185 burials, a quarter contained grave-goods (45 buckles for 48 burials) in an equal ratio between men and women. This is not rare in Burgundian sites, where the ratio of finds is much lower than the burials in the Centre and the North of Francia. When there are finds, however, these are of exceptional originality and very rich in information; e.g. in Roissard, where only one three-piece

⁵⁶¹ See Boyer, op.cit., note 45 for the two shrouded and dressed sarcophagi burials n° V and XX. The manner of the inhumations after the supposed Burgundian occupation of the site used for burial by a small rural community for over than 100 years, testify to an even simpler burial only with a shroud outside of which the grave goods are placed on the body, usually under the head. After the beginning of the 6th century we have fully dressed burials without a shroud. Out of the 185 inhumations in the burgundian sector, only 48 were furnished, 45 of them male or female to an equal degree had buckles, buckle-plates, rings, or belt-fittings. The plate-buckles were associated with men- there are also three incinerations in the burgundian sector in late 5th century-. By contrast from the 17 Gallo-roman burials, more than half are very well furnished.

⁵⁶² Cotton fibres also in two more examples from Augsburg and Elisried, see Treffort, op. cit., note 560, p. 38-39. Galliard de Sémainville and Françoise Vallet associate this practice to mediterranean influence in “Fibules et plaques-boucles mérovingiennes de la collection Febvre conservées au Musée des Antiquités Nationales,” *Antiquités Nationales* n° 11, pp. 57-77. Cotton was extremely rare in the West in the early middle ages and it could be considered as the textile relic *exotica par excellence*. It is only in Gregory of Tours where we do find written evidence that some early medieval people knew of that curiosity. He mentions most probably cotton in the *Liber in Gloria Martyrum*, (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 12, 499, 5: “*Prope autem Iericho habentur arbores, quae lana gignunt... Et de his enim ferunt ipsi Hiesu Nave solere indumenta*”. The discovery of cotton in a Burgundian burial context of an individual who did not belong to an élite, but probably who had some kind of ecclesiastical vocation, makes a statement about the communication and exchange networks in this period.

We know today that cotton started being cultivated in the valley of Tiberias from Late Antiquity, the Early Byzantine period at Rogem Zafir, see “The early Islamic period at Kefar Shahak and Hahal Omer” in Shamir O., “The Textiles, Basketry and Cordage from Qarantal-Cave 38: the First Medieval Assemblage Discovered in Palestine,” *Archaeological Textiles Newsletter* 32, Spring (2001), pp. 19-21 and also idem, “Report of the Israel Antiquities Authority: Textiles found along the spice route from the Roman period until the early islamic period in Israel,” *Archaeological Textiles Newsletter* 14 May (1992), pp. 12-14. It would be worthwhile if we would be able to examine and speculate the extent to which cotton was used in Byzantium, and the extent of its cultivation in the Eastern Provinces of the Middle East and Egypt.

Burgundian nielloed set was found in a group of 18 burials and this elaborate set belonged to a woman in grave 14.⁵⁶³ By contrast in Saint-Julien-en-Genevois, a predominantly male cemetery, probably a monastery, the only damascened set belonged to a man in grave 20.⁵⁶⁴

The decorative themes on around dozen reliquaries of this type that bear a resemblance to the Tonancius plate buckle comprise crosses and figurative decoration of the prophets Daniel among lions, Habbakuk, Christ triumphant, and orant pairs.⁵⁶⁵ The inscriptions are formulaic and refer to blessings, the names of prophets, the three Hebrew boys thrown in the furnace, Emmanuel, saints (Peter and Paul) and the divinity (Dominus, Deus, Numen). The notion behind all these is the same: what is hidden will suffer death and corruption and finally will be set free, as symbolised in the depiction of the sealed tomb of Christ amidst the dormant guards on the ivory belt plate of St Caesarius of Arles at St Trofime, Arles.⁵⁶⁶ Another point is that although the inscribed buckles are characterised as Burgundian, because they were found in this region only, they do not have runic inscriptions but the correct and coherent Latin of late Antiquity, which makes their dating possible and also raises the possibility that not only Tonancius and Maxo the artisan, but more people in this Gallo-Roman-Burgundian community and other regions, read Latin in the early 6th century. In addition, their context is funerary, and their character personal and unique because they were made on order. Entire texts are rendered in a cryptographical idiom where some letters only are chosen from a word to

⁵⁶³ See Collardelle, op.cit., note 53, Roissard-Isère, I pp. 27-56, Roissard-Isère II: three damascened plaque-buckles for 187 burials, two belonging to women: grave 14, grave 8. The three-piece bicoloured damascened set of the middle of the 7th century was found in Cognin IV, Grave 3 of a young woman, ibidem, 286, fig 113. This set was placed at her feet as has been remarked happened in intermediate periods before the change of burial customs as it happened with the Tonancius burial. Also in Etrembieres, an aged woman was buried with a plaque-buckle and contre-plaque decorated with crosses at the left of her head, ibidem, p. 317-318.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf Collardelle, note 53, plan and grids of finds according to sex in the funerary basilica of St-Julien-en-Genevois, p. 81.

⁵⁶⁵ See Treffort, op.cit., note 560, pp. 34-35, 46 and Collardelle, note 53, p. 117, the five plate-buckles from La Roche-sur-Foron, the plate of Saint Marcel à Tarentaise, p. 293; the plaque-buckle of Mésigny, p. 323. The themes of Daniel in the lion's pit, the three hebrews in the furnace and Saint Peter baptising the centurion Cornelius appear also on the sides of the sarcophagus of Bellegarde-Poussieu (Collardelle, fig 99, p. 235).

⁵⁶⁶ See fig 3.42, the ivory plate-buckle, the liturgical *cingulum* of the Bishop of Arles which is exhibited in the Museum de l' Arles antique. (Mannheim Reiss-Museum, *Die Franken wegbereiter Europas*, (Mainz, 1996), p. 376). Another ivory plate-buckle from Cologne in the Römisch-germanischen Museum bears the inscription: *Ego Leodobodus fecit* (Werner J., "Die Beinschnalle des Leodobodus," *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 23 (1990), pp. 273-313).

express its whole value, and letters are used often in repetition. This filling of space can have an aesthetic basis, or more probably there is an apotropaic and magical value in these messages from beyond the grave.⁵⁶⁷

Treffort has suggested that the redundant letters in the inscriptions are a device of memorisation of a *commendatio animae* liturgy and that the relic in the hollow makes up for the *ad sanctos* burial, in a row-grave cemetery without a chapel which would not probably be considered hallowed ground. The first point seems plausible but, as to the second, a growing number of row-grave cemeteries have been discovered that had light wooden structures of *memoriae*, which are chapels in their own right.⁵⁶⁸

This plate-buckle and others similar to it, also pose questions about the vestimentary barriers between the clergy and the secular world: the buckle of Yverdon was made for *Polemius clericus*,⁵⁶⁹ the buckle of Saint-Maur for *Renatus diaconus*,⁵⁷⁰ and the buckle of Yvoire was made for *masculum et feminam Dei Iustinam* by an *Alius presbyter*.⁵⁷¹ This last one was clearly made by a priest artisan. The artisan Landelinus⁵⁷² declares boldly that he has represented divinity: the inscription *fecit numen* on the buckle he made underlines the significance of these buckles as holy objects. Could these be used

⁵⁶⁷ Generally *Vivas*, *Utere felix* while the *Vivas in spe*, *Vivat in pace*, *vivas in Deo*, which would be more appropriate for strictly funerary use as also the *Spe Ani* inscription (*Ani* is the first person singular of the personal pronoun in Hebrew, one of the sacred languages of the early Christianity and used in late antique magic, the *Ego* of Divinity).

⁵⁶⁸ As in Lavoye, and Mazerny, see Appendix II also see Young B.K., “The Myth of the Pagan Cemetery”, in Karkov, C. et alii (eds.), *Spaces of the Living and the Dead: an Archaeological Dialogue*, (Oxford, 1997), pp. 61-87, esp. 86-87. He supports there that considering what is known about the liturgy of the dead in the first Christian centuries, the funerary office took place in a church usually near the community while the cemeteries of the period were outside the city or in the fields, which means that a lot of “pagan” cemeteries were cemeteries of christians or mostly of christians. In the case of Monnet-la-Ville and other cemeteries in Burgundy and in the Frankish North I find this very plausible. Also cf. Treffort C., “Du mort vêtu à la nudité eschatologique (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)”, in Connochie-Bourgne C., (ed.), *Le Nu et le Vêtu au Moyen Age (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)*, Actes du 25e colloque du CUER MA 2-3-4 mars 2000 à l’Université de Provence, (Aix-en-Provence, 2001), pp. 351-363.

⁵⁶⁹ The inscription reads: WILLIME/RES FECIT FI/ BLA? POLE/MOI (?)CLER (ICO). (*CIMAH: Corpus Inscriptionum Medii Aevi Helvetiae*, Jörg, C., (ed.), Vol. II, *Die Inschriften der Kantonen Freiburg, Genf, Jura, Neuenburg und Waadt*, (Fribourg, 1984) also discussed in Treffort, p. 33.

⁵⁷⁰ The inscription was transliterated by Le Blant in 1856 (Le Blant E., *Les Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaul antérieures au VIIIe siècle*, tom. I, Collections des documents inédits sur l’histoire de France, (Paris, 1856), pp. 493-494 : RENATUS DEACONUS VIV/AT.../CUM PACE ?? ANNUS CEN[TUM], and also discussion in Treffort, p. 39.

⁵⁷¹ See eadem, p. 32.

⁵⁷² See note 560, FECIT NUMEN resembles what a byzantine artisan would have written : “διά χειρός ἐποίησε”: (holy grace) through my hand made this.

by both clerics and ordinary people in a period where the vestimentary barriers were fluid?

If Landelinus was a cleric he would probably have declared his identity and vocation the way his colleague Alius did. Although the buckle deposited in grave 20 at Monnet-la-Ville was the only such object in a small rural cemetery of a 6th-century community, we cannot propose that Tonancius was the priest of this community. Nevertheless, this plate buckle is inscribed within the corpus of the Burgundian reliquaries by virtue of the hollow with the cotton cloth fragment, and the typological similarity to the rest, if not because of its Christian iconographical content. St-Maur, Agaune and Chalôn-sur-Saône are nearby monastic centres with well known artisanal production and probably every Christian in the early 6th century - Tonancius included - could claim active participation in the holy rites and use of holy objects. It seems that these reliquary buckles could be used by both clerics and ordinary people, at least in this period, even if there is still a possibility that they were liturgical objects.

Women ordered and wore them too, as the name Iustina in the inscription of the buckle of Yvoire shows.⁵⁷³ It was found in a double successive burial. The term “woman of God” usually refers to postulants or nuns, but in this case it seems that the buckle was ordered by a pious couple in one of the nearby monastic workshops, possibly after a pilgrimage. Double and multiple burials are quite often found in Savoie, Isère and Drôme, in stark contrast to the rest of Francia in the same period. Unfortunately we do not have paleoanthropological analysis on the skeleton who had the Iustina plate at the head as found at Yvoire, which came from a 19th-century excavation, to confirm that indeed that was a burial of a couple; but there is enough evidence from the anthropological analyses today in the sites in the vicinity to confirm that quite a few of these objects were indeed worn by women.⁵⁷⁴ For one site, the cemetery of La Balme,

⁵⁷³ See eadem, p. 39.

⁵⁷⁴ See Collardelle, note 53, and 575, pp. 421-423 (Répartition sexuelle des individus à l'intérieur des nécropoles) : The anthropological analysis and the gendering of skeletons took place in the following Burgundian cemeteries: in Saint-Julien-des-Genevois, Viuz-Faverges, Saint-Jean-Baptiste I-II, Cognin I-IV, Roissard, Thonon “Les Ursules”, The first three showed exceptional levels of supemascularity (78-87%) suggesting that these were burial sites of religious or professional agglomerations-monks, workers, builders, serfs, artisans- 65% died in their forties so most of the artefacts were worn by young mature adults. In the rest of the cemeteries, a few large plate buckles were ascribed to very few women. We should not forget that the finds in Burgundy are generally scarce in comparison to the Frankish north. e.g. In Roissard, there was one large buckle plate for 18 burials.

although we do not have anthropological data, in all probability we can identify it with *La Balma*, the large nunnery whose abbess was the sister of Abbot Romanus, according to the evidence and a description in the *Vita Patrum Jurensium*.⁵⁷⁵ The contexts in which these belts were found could be both secular and ecclesiastical, from a number of community cemeteries around this place and perhaps from this and other not yet identified convents.⁵⁷⁶

More parts of belts could be venerated as relics at times or used in the liturgy and then converted into an intercessory medium with the divinity: one of these is the leather strap venerated as a belt shrine in Moylough in Ireland which was encircled by two sheets of copper-alloy held together by riveted round mouldings.⁵⁷⁷ The belt buckle with a rectangular buckle plate and counter plate was false and it is probable that the belt shrine with a circumference of 92 cm was made to protect the leather strap inside and facilitate its use, probably when it was placed around the sick and the devout. An additional feature of this belt reliquary is that although its metal fittings are of Irish craftsmanship and dated on a stylistic basis to the 8th century, their shape imitates Aquitanian or Burgundian types of buckles of the 6th and 7th centuries, which makes it comparable to the Burgundian inscribed reliquaries described above. The existing studies of dress of early medieval Ireland leave open the possibility that the shrine imitates foreign or ecclesiastical rather than secular Irish belt types.⁵⁷⁸ In addition, it is known that a number of prominent Irish monks were active in Burgundy in the 7th century, and it would be possible in terms of the general shape and form, if not in the style of metalwork, that a *cingulum* of an abbot

⁵⁷⁵ According to the *Vita Patrum Jurensium*, op. cit., I, c. 9: the description of the nunnery and ibid, I, c. 19, the reference to the sister of Romanus. (Martine F., (ed.), *Vie des pères du Jura, Sources Chrétiennes* 142, (Paris, 1968), pp. 264-267 and pp. 304-305. Romanus also appears in Gregory of Tours, *Vita Patrum*, I, 6, asking his brother Lupicinus to be buried at the convent of *La Balma* so as his tomb to be easily accessible to sick women as well and be able to perform miraculous cures for them too from there, because women were forbidden to enter the monastery of the fathers. (Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae patrum*, Krusch B., (ed.), (MGH) *Scr rer Mer* 1.2, (Hannover, 1885), I, 6, p. 672, pp. 661-744; *Life of the Fathers*, James E., (trans.), (Liverpool, 1985).

⁵⁷⁶ Cognin I-IV was an example where the skeletons were mostly women, see Collardelle, p. 423.

⁵⁷⁷ See fig 3.43 and Youngs S., (ed.), *The Works of Angels: Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork 6th -9th centuries A.D.*, (Austin, 1989), pp. 58-59. BALME

⁵⁷⁸ See Fitzgerald M.A., "Insular dress in early medieval Ireland", item in Owen-Crocker G.R., "Anglo-Saxon Texts and Contexts," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 79.3 (1997), pp. 251-261.

or bishop as it appears in the *Vita Patrum Iurensium*⁵⁷⁹ would look like this if in place of the false buckle, a reliquary buckle plate of the early 6th century was riveted instead, like that of the Tonancius grave.

The lines between the clergy and the élites could however be quite clear-cut in the following centuries, at least as expressed in devotional objects as in the part of a belt reliquary found in the middle of the 8th century in the last instances of furnished burials in pre-Carolingian Bavaria,⁵⁸⁰ the reliquary strap-end found in Walda, Bavaria.⁵⁸¹ Because of the special historical circumstances of the region, this reliquary strap was interred with its owner and this is one of the rare cases where we catch a glimpse of the fashion in belts and baldrics in the middle of the 8th century. Bavaria of the 8th century is the place where the last dressed inhumations of the upper registers of the local society are attested: the ordinary folk of the villages and farms nearby preferred the shroud burial, as was the norm in Francia by then. The nobles insisted on keeping the old ways, evidently not because they were in defiance against what the Church had been promulgating for over a century, but as a declaration of regional independence against the Pippinids and Frankish expansion.

The dressed burial of a nobleman in a chapel in Walda, dated to the middle of the 8th century, is not a solitary case of a furnished burial; more members of the local élites chose to have a dressed burial in the 8th century, and these are the last known archaeological sources that preserve information about the dress systems of this period. The grave contained a gold foil cross, stitched on what would be a festive robe, which was girded with a belt strap with a gilt-bronze incised hollow reliquary strap-end and with a separate baldric; this last comprised a buckle and metal studs and a gold-fringed sheath for a long scramasax. Fashion had changed in the middle of the 8th century and there was only one strap-end and not two as we have seen so far, and the belt buckle was rather small and simple. The studs of the baldric were small and rectangular and fitted to a rather narrow strap. The hollow of the strap-end had two compartments into which

⁵⁷⁹ See *Vita Patrum Iurensium*, *Romani*, *Lupicini*, *Eugendi*, (*MGH*) *Scr rer Mer* 3, 9, 157, 20: “*Soluto namque Beatus Romanus sancti illius cingulo constringit illico lumbos Eugendi.*”

⁵⁸⁰ See Walda, among the Bavarian sites with furnished burials of the élites mostly, in most of the 8th century in Appendix II: Bavarian sites, see fig 3. 25.

⁵⁸¹ See Stein, *op.cit.*, note 34 and Dannheimer H., “Ein spätmerowingischer Eulogienbehälter von Walda, ” *Germania* XLIV (1966), pp. 338-354.

organic remains of bone were enveloped in wax. Although the burial of the Walda warrior was in fact *ad sanctos* anyway, he nevertheless took with him a relic which had accompanied him perhaps for years, as a kind of a ticket to heaven and protection on his way there. It is of significance that the relic, as also is the case in the Tonancius burial, the most precious possession of this man, is entrusted to a part of his most private and personal belongings, the belt. In the case of a woman, however, a reliquary case might be probably hidden in a necklace or a pendant cross or in a ring. However, not so during the period of this study: Merovingian Frankish and Anglo-Saxon women preferred to carry relics in reliquary boxes,⁵⁸² round or cylindrical amulet cases with cloth linings, and preferred to hang them from their girdles, or chatelaines. This is another attestation to the significance these people put on their belts and the habit of hanging all significant, useful and even symbolic, magical and devotional objects on them. Carrying relics around one's waist could be the result also of their form, material and dimensions. Larger pieces would dictate a larger hollow; conversely the parts of the belt, buckle-plate and strap-end could carry the relic without anyone noticing it; and amulet boxes look pretty much the same as sewing kit boxes. It is striking that at least for these two cases, in early 6th-century Burgundy and in 8th-century Bavaria, the cloth or bones of a saint or the fibres from the Holy Land were put and kept in reliquaries made in a form that would accommodate the specific dimensions and the material of the venerated object. This means that belt reliquaries, at least from Burgundy and from Bavaria, even if they were as far apart in time as these two, were ordered and designed by the owner or his most intimate circle; and, if not unique in type, at least they were selected for the specific type of relic.⁵⁸³

The belts as reliquaries could become closed, secret receptacles of organic remains and mediate between Heaven and Earth. Belts could be used as miniature holy books or miniature icons bearing holy writs or imagery or magical inscriptions on their

⁵⁸² See Meaney A. S., *Amulets and Curing stones*, British Archaeological Reports BAR 96, (Oxford, 1981), pp. 184-186 and Crowfoot E., "Textile fragments from "relic- boxes" in Anglo-Saxon graves", in Walton-P. Wild J.P., (eds.), *Textiles in Northern Archaeology, NESAT III: Textile Symposium in York 6-9 May 1987*, North European Symposium for Archaeological Textiles Monograph 3, (London, 1990), pp.235-246, see fig 3.44. The textiles from the lining come from Kent, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire spanning the 6th to the late 7th century.

⁵⁸³ There is a similar reliquary strap-end from Brescia as well, and there is a possibility that the belt and strap-end was of Italian manufacture. See note 581, Dannheimer, Table 27, 2a, 2b.

broad and visible to all surface. A strap, like the *bracile* of a monk,⁵⁸⁴ could be venerated in its entirety and be worn in rituals of healing. Girdle hangings comprising of cylindrical amulet boxes could secretly enclose relics or ligatures. All parts of a girdle, secretly or in the open, could be used to signal messages to the invisible forces.⁵⁸⁵ They were hung on the person and were carried in the same way as hand-tools by both men and women. Even if the vestimentary limits between lay people and clerics were probably not very clearly defined in the period, the belt as a ritual object had a semantically corporeal character for both genders, and all social categories, secular or not, becoming the nexus of the material body to the other world.

Apart from these doubly hallowed burials, contained within a zone of divine protection and embedded within social norms, the dress and the belts of the executed, foreigners, the decapitated, the prone burials in both Francia and Anglo-Saxon England offer some facts for consideration in reference to the complexities in the nature of discrimination in these contexts. There might have been religious or secular death penalties we know very little about, or cases of honorable violent death, political executions, or a great variability of personal choices of a symbolic and religious character in the Early Middle Ages. What were the belts, if any, of the people buried at the outskirts of the cemetery, the deviants, the poor, the foreigners, the sick? I will only pose the questions here, but the absence or not of belts facilitates the organisation of the facts, if not their further understanding.

The occupants of Lunel-Viel, which lies between Montpellier and Nîmes, in the middle of the 6th century were buried in two cemeteries.⁵⁸⁶ Grave 166 in the Verdier cemetery is a late 5th-century prone burial of a man outside the graves of the family plots. Nothing else than his position separates him from his contemporaries. Was this personal or a communal choice, an act of penitence or contrition?⁵⁸⁷ Outside the early medieval

⁵⁸⁴ See pp. 44-50.

⁵⁸⁵ Compare with the sermon of Caesarius of Arles, note 195, p. 203.

⁵⁸⁶ An older Gallo-roman cemetery of the Verdier and also in the first phase of the cemetery in Les Horts See Garnotel A., Raynaud C., "Groupés or dispersés ? Les morts et la société rurale en Languedoc oriental (IVe-XIIe siècles) ", in *Archéologie du cimetière Chretien, Actes du 2^e colloque A.R..C.H. E. A.*, (Tours, 1996), pp. 139-153.

⁵⁸⁷ A similar case was found in an equally unfurnished grave (Grave 185) of a man in the Gallo-Roman section of Monnet-la-Ville, his hand was amputated also, but he was buried in a proper grave too without

settlement, there are 8 burials within the ruins of an abandoned Roman villa. Four young men and three women and a child were found between stones and the infill damped by the community. They had a variable treatment; the men were thrown into hasty pits without any goods or protection so their remains were variously disturbed. The women and child had well made graves, were properly laid out and two were wearing buckle-plates and long bow *fibulae* that dated the entire context to the early 6th century.⁵⁸⁸ These burials were outside physical, social and spiritual protection. Who turned then out of Lunel Viel? Was this the result of accidental death of foreigners, contagious illness, a criminal massacre? Could they be slaves or hostages?

The accidental death of a stranger in the middle of the 8th century in Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire received another treatment, but this and also his vestimentary details are bound up with his status as a smith.⁵⁸⁹ In the Anglo-Saxon execution burials, half of the men who were decapitated were buried dressed, buckled and with their weapons and almost half of all female prone burials were furnished, but only 1/3 of them with their brooches and girdle hangings and even their amulet bags, as in Sewerby, or the very well-dressed lady at Westbury, Milton Keynes who had had both her arms amputated in all probability.⁵⁹⁰ The status of the individual was not lost in the execution or the expression of contempt at his or her death, but it is more likely that more women of low status in Anglo-Saxon England of the 7th/ 8th century had a non-furnished prone burial than the executed men.

Audun-le-Tiche, in Northern Francia, offers a different view of deviancy: apart from a significant number of missing skulls, two double male burials were attested. Double burials is a trait of the 10% best furnished graves in the context, usually of

furnishings. It seems that Early Christian gallo-romans in the South of Gaul applied harsh penalties, religious or secular before the Burgundians are visible in the cemetery.

⁵⁸⁸ Of the lyriform type usually found in Visigothic burial contexts, the Estagel female costume of a certain status and see *C.A.T.H.M.A.*, Leenhardt M., Raynaud C., Schneider L. *et alii*, "Céramiques languedociennes du haut Moyen Age (Vile-XIe S.), Études micro-régionales et essai de synthèse", in *Archéologie du Midi Médiéval* XI (1993), pp.175-185 on the excavations in the cemeteries of Lunel Viel.

⁵⁸⁹ Hinton D.A., *A Smith in Lindsey: The Anglo-Saxon Grave in Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Ser. 16, (London, 2000).

⁵⁹⁰ See Stoodley, note 322, pp. 103-104 and Hirst S., *An Anglo-Saxon Inhumation cemetery at Sewerby, East Yorkshire*, (York, 1985), pp. 14 -46, also Ivens R.J., *et alii*, *Tattenhoe and Westbury: Two deserted medieval settlements in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Ser 8, (Aylesbury, 1995), pp. 71-78.

biologically related individuals (graves 105 and 103).⁵⁹¹ The bodies were found wearing damascened buckle sets, baldrics, scramasaxes in their sheaths, vestiges of leather and textiles. In grave 105, additionally, was found the only sword out of 185 burials.⁵⁹² The only difference in these élite graves was that all heads were missing, and grave 105 was dug to accommodate headless occupants. The honorary furnishings and treatment of the burials suggest violent death in battle, or political execution in all finery, as in the case of Count Ambrose in Bergamo described by Liutprand of Cremona.⁵⁹³ It seems that status and gender distinctions were even more accentuated in this deviant category, especially as seen through the examination of their belts and clothes.

E. Conclusion: The structural element of dress in the written sources and the archaeology. Changes of form and of meaning in clothing systems and a stylistic messaging system revisited.

The main objective of this enquiry was to investigate early medieval dress as both a linguistic and non-verbal semiotic system, and in particular its articulation and the ways it functioned. Here, I examined the possibility that the focus of integral coherence of the system was located in the structural axis of dress, in its shape and in the belt artefact. This could be attested in the ways this axis contributed to processes of vestimentary change, and expressed and created meaning and ideology. I will attempt now to answer two sets of questions around these issues and also the functions of these objects, on the basis of

⁵⁹¹ Simmer A., “La nécropole mérovingienne d’ Audun -le-Tiche,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 35 (1978), pp. 31-40.

⁵⁹² A 65 % of the men buried between 620-650 were buried with weapons while 1/3 of them with two weapons each, axe and scramasax or spear and scramasax.

⁵⁹³ See note 233, Liutprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, (MGH) SSRG 4, Becker J., (ed.), (Hannover and Leipzig, 1915), 12, I, 23: *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*. Liutprand of Cremona, Scott B., (ed. and trans.), Bristol Classical Press, (London, 1993), p. 50.

“...cum ense, balteo, armillis, ceteris pretiosissimi indumentis” ...in his finest clothes, sword, belt and armlets complete... (comment on the manner of the execution of Count of Bergamo Ambrose).

this discussion of the belts and the shape of the garment in the construction of early medieval vestimentary systems. The questions pertain to three general categories. The first set refers to the social roles and to the identities signified by these artefacts, concerning distinctions of gender and status. The second explores issues of property related to these artefacts and to social categories who used them; and the last category questions prominence, visibility and meaning of the structural axis of dress.⁵⁹⁴

Whose belts and girdles do we find in the narrative sources, in the poems, in the wills, in the legal documents, and are these the same social categories that are attested in the mortuary archaeology and the relics throughout the period of this study? The earlier and the most numerous written sources are Frankish, and there is a strong bias in favour of Frankish documentation, so we do not have a basis for textual comparison until the middle of 7th century with Anglo-Saxon England. The *baltea*, the baldrics of the élites, secular and ecclesiastical, military and not military, the *cingula*, the liturgical belts and girdles of prelates, which are mostly named *zoniae* for bishops and *cingula* for abbots, each having their own belt *realia*, and the ceremonial belts of different functions and aspects of royalty, *cingula*, *baltea* and *zoniae*, feature in the poems, the wills and the historical narratives. Soldiers, officials and landowners wore *baltea*, baldrics mostly, in legislative texts. Baldrics are encountered more often than anything, worn with or without a sword, and this directly reflects the profusion of the elaborate buckle sets with a counter plate and back-plate and other belt fittings worn more often with a scramasax than a sword in reality, as found in men's graves throughout Francia, though mostly in the North, and the Rhineland, in the 6th and even more markedly in the 7th century. Are all these men members of the élites? Probably not, as in some sites they reach 60%. The accentuation in the use of the military belts is not felt through the texts, apart perhaps from the later legislation of the middle of the 8th century. The 30%-60% of men with weapons and baldrics in the North Frankish sites could reflect the various percentages in Francia of men who owned some land and had obligations to the army, once a year, and wore a sword or a more easily crafted equivalent of a offensive weapon for most of them. More weapons, defensive among them, precious metals, imported metalwork could be the

⁵⁹⁴ See the two sets of questions, pp. 225, in section 3.5 and 229-240, in section 3.6.

criteria for who the chiefs of the communities really were, as in Famars or Lavoye or as found in Saint-Denis, Paris.

The vestiges of liturgical belts of prelates are in reality much rarer than in the texts, to the measure we can tell, as the best-known sarcophagus burials of bishops and abbots and abbesses fell victim of later disturbances and became the target of despoliations.⁵⁹⁵ It seems that in the 6th century there is a possibility that some of these were made of metal and were reliquary-shaped, or with an ivory buckle-plate, as the one that is ascribed to St Caesarius. Apart from this possibility, throughout the period, most of these must have been girdles made of fabric, the embroidered or tablet-woven *zoniae* of the sources, looking probably like St Cuthbert's already in the 6th and 7th centuries. Monks in saints' lives wore either a leather strap with a plain buckle, the *bracile*, or a rope or linen girdle, the *balteolum* or *funiculum*. There is a little evidence for the plain buckles in sites with a preponderance of male burials in churchyards in the South of Gaul or Burgundy as in St-Julien-en-Genevois or Faverges from the early 6th to the 7th century or in Flixborough in the late 7th and 8th century. In the written sources, the linen girdle and the buckled strap belong to different rules and monastic traditions, which have been impossible to trace in the burial record, as very few rural early monastic burial sites have been identified with certainty - and if they have, these are urban sites, very much disturbed by later phases of ecclesiastical and secular burials.⁵⁹⁶ If the belts of other categories, artisans, well-to-do people, priests, dependent farmers, servants appear at all in saints' lives and sermons, it is either because their role is directly relevant to a more privileged person than they, or because the sermon addresses them directly. These are mentioned briefly by the terms *cingulum* and *bracile* and must reflect, in Francia at least,

⁵⁹⁵ As it is the case with the sarcophagi of the Abbesses (Theodechildis, Agilbertis, Mode, Balde) in Jouarre, twice destroyed by the Vikings, and Anglo-Burgundians in the late 14th century, only one of which preserved a piece of gold foil braid and gold foil strips from embroidery. (Abbess Balde, see Jouarre Appendix I, Frankish archaeological sources, see Maillé, de Marquise, *Les Cryptes de Jouarre*, (Plans et relevés Rousseau P.), (Paris, 1971), ii-xvi, introduction, pp. 77-221.

⁵⁹⁶ See the cases of the probably monastic burials at the Cloister of St Martin of Tours, (Galinié H., "Fouilles archéologiques à Tours, 1981. Rapport préliminaire," *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique de Touraine* 40 (1982), pp. 153-199 and Galinié H., Randoin B., "Recherches sur Tours, Les fouilles du Cloître Saint-Martin. Informations Archéologiques Circonscription de la Touraine," *Gallia* 41 (1983), pp. 314-319.

the intermediate categories with ornate buckles and tools that might reach another 30% especially in the Centre and Neustria. We hear very little about artisans and community priests, dependent workers and farmers, and in all probability these must have been among these 60% -75% or more of the people found with a plain belt buckle and a knife or a toggle that appear also in 6th - and 7th-century Anglo-Saxon England. There is not a single hint as to the local varieties of costume, belts and fittings or girdles for men and very little information on their hanging purses from the belt. There is not a single hint as to the toilet sets, flints, awls, tools that are so evident in the material record, in all regions including Anglo-Saxon England, or to the fact that for the majority of men of Central and Southern Gaul weapons are a rarity, or that many women are equally or much more adorned and prominent visually than the men in these parts. Instead of this, the preponderance of baldrics is attested throughout the period in the texts as if the pockets with the weapon burials in Aquitaine and Burgundy represented the whole of the population. If all this information about the usage of one crucial signifier of dress could be obscured, we can hardly imagine how much has been lost about the rest of the vestimentary systems. This can be the result of the fact that all discourse in our period was a product of exactly those social categories who wore the baldrics and the stately belts as found in the North of Francia, with the exception perhaps of some of the literary monks, writers of saints' lives, who belonged in the intermediate categories between the élites and dependants. Change in male dress is evidenced, however, for the men who appear so much more often than the women in the sources, in the slow rate of the adoption of new terms like the *bracile*, in the crystallisation of the ecclesiastical belts towards the *zona* of the bishop and the *cingulum* of the abbot. Other terms became obsolete by the 7th century, and the terms became fewer in a period when even more varieties of types and sizes of men's metalwork buckles appear throughout Francia. The evidence between the two types of sources in Francia diverges mostly in the 7th century and can be compared with Anglo-Saxon England, where no written evidence of clothes exists in the 6th and most of the 7th century. In Francia the texts disengage gradually from descriptions of ordinary people, and the quality and nature of information we get from both Francia and Anglo-Saxon England is restricted to the material record. It is as if the texts at times move into a separate reality, where objective everyday facts do not matter.

The differences between an ecclesiastical girdle and the belt of a magistrate in the sources were quite easy to contextualise: different terms would be employed, where the first would be called a *zona* especially after the 7th century if it was indeed a girdle made of fabric, and the second either a *cingulum* in the 6th and 7th century or a *balteum* in later periods. Earlier, during the 6th century, there would be more possibilities for all terms to have been interchangeable and to overlap. Differences like that would be difficult to tell in the archaeology if the vestiges of a prestigious belt set without a weapon were found near a body, in the cases of both the magistrate and the bishop, unless silk fragments were preserved in the contexts of other ecclesiastical vestments, or a paten or other inscriptions accompanied the burial. Even if a buckle plate was inscribed and incised with Christian imagery, it would be impossible to tell the secular or ecclesiastical function of the object within one vestimentary system on this basis alone. Artefacts like this were described in the sources by overlapping terms unless they were materially different. They also had a versatile parallel usage and were associated with a number of prestigious social roles pertaining to secular and Church office, or could be worn by lay men and women who could afford them as devotional objects with prophylactic properties.

What kinds of belts or girdles were attested in the sources for the women? Were these found to be the same in the archaeology?

Only a few women's belts and girdles, the *cingula* and *zonae*, appear in poems, narratives and wills, as we saw in Italy, but these are usually worn by royalty or very prominent women and are attested until the 7th century. The vast majority of the great artefactual variety of the types evidenced in the burials, the shapes and cuts, the regional costumes and attitudes toward what was foreign and imported or from another locality of the 6th and 7th century, are not found in the sources; and this was the case equally for Francia and Anglo-Saxon England. There is only one exception, the description of the Thuringian Radegund, who still retained elements at least of the dress of the barbarians even in the Neustrian court of the 540's, probably dressed in a *peplos* with lots of metalwork on the veil and dress and a buckled belt, while others wore overcoats or cut-to-shape tunics.⁵⁹⁷ Evidence of vestimentary change in cut, shape, and accessories between the 6th and the 7th century is not attested in the descriptions of the structural

⁵⁹⁷ See Chapter 2, notes 43, 59.

element of dress in the sources or any other description of clothes of women. It is implied that a *cingulum* can be made of fibres too, and that a royal *zona* and a *cingulum* can be made of metal foil in its entirety. Generally, the use of plain belt buckles for so many women, the knives, chatelaines, purses, the sashes in the Frankish North, the large nielloed sets from Neustria, or the large varieties for a great proportion of women in the Centre, the South and Burgundy, are no more mentioned than the hangings and the oval buckles of Kentish or Anglian women. It is men's belts that are more prominent everywhere in the written sources, and this picture fits with the rather obscure vestimentary *mores* of the majority of the women of the North and Anglo-Saxon England for the 7th century mostly. The picture of the social and gender contest in appearance is only attested in the material record. This contrasted to what was evidenced in the more balanced ratio of gendered belt representation in other areas like Burgundy, or the preponderance of women's dress and number of gendered artefacts for most of the 6th century, to a degree in Rhineland, the North, and to a great extent in Septimania, Burgundy and all regions of Anglo-Saxon England.

What were the meanings of a girdle in the texts, and how did they look in the archaeology? Were these girdles appropriate for men too? The gendering of the artefacts in the sources was proved in this case, biased towards the most probable types of belts that would adhere to the social roles of the soldier, courtier, clergyman. A *cingulum* in its broader sense could mean the girdle worn by a number of women. The cords and girdles of some of the monks - *funicula*, *balteoli* - probably looked like the girdle of the man buried in Marseille, tied in a knot with an iron ring. This was probably the most common form of girdle for men and women, who used it to keep in place a longer or shorter woollen tunic over a shirt or a chemise that appears to have been the main dress for a large portion of the population. Almost half of the people used a plain buckled strap or equivalent to lend their shape to their tunic, to keep in place and to hang handtools and pouches from it. Men and women could in reality hang objects from girdles as evidenced in Wakerley and other sites. Tablet-woven girdles in the later 7th century could be very long and made of silk as the one worn by the Abbess of Chelles Bertille, or very colourful and elaborately woven as the girdle of Balthild. So, élite women could wear this as an equivalent to a buckle set, even if the evidence for composite belted girdles is very

scanty. It is probable that the elegant strap-ends found in Flixborough, Barking, Whitby had been attached to long tablet-woven girdles. Most women and men could wear this item, which has vanished leaving behind one or more iron rings, but more people preferred the buckled leather strap.

Who could inherit these artefacts, and was allowed to wear and sell them in the wills and the Carolingian formularies? Can we visualise these belts from the mortuary record? Belts and metal fittings and buckles, attested as *balteum* and *bracile*, were not willed in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England before the 8th century. In Italy, the same words were found in one earlier document among elaborate and expensive clothing. There is a probability that mostly the heavy metallic parts that were part of men's belts or baldrics were passed down and became a part of the inheritance, and were invested with the symbolic role of coming of age and of acquiring power for the young heirs of élite families. We do not know if these were worn by women, who do not bequeath them, at least not in the evidence we have. The late 7th- and 8th-century equivalents of the baldrics worn by the chiefs in the rural communities or the Aquitanian or Neustrian imported belt sets as found in 7th-century Kent, or the Burgundian reliquaries, would in all probability be passed down to the next generation and be recycled. The traces of the fashion between the late 7th and the 10th century are lost to us, with the exception of a few Bavarian furnished burials, unless a belt of the 9th-10th centuries crops up in a church inventory in the future.

How can we tell from the written sources and the archaeology about the change in vestimentary systems, society and concepts of the human body for men and women in the period of the fully-dressed furnished burials and even for some regions in the 8th and 9th centuries? Three criteria were used here to analyse the facts from the material record, and these were based on the premise that the comparative gender artefactual prominence, the focus of display, and the interactive interpretation of the axis of dress, revealed important corporeal significations of vestimentary expression of gender and status.⁵⁹⁸ The idea of the gendered body in Francia and in Anglo-Saxon England was articulated around the social functions and roles of individuals: the signifiers of the activities of the individuals

⁵⁹⁸ All changes in the form and the function of linguistic terms and of artefacts reflect deeper changes in their social and cultural context.

were deposited next to the bodies, or hung from their belts. The signifier of personal identities like status, regional provenance and in most regions the gender of the individual was expressed in the form and style of the belt on the body. These identities were variously nuanced by notions of life-cycle, and changed according to social conditions; and this could be expressed in the change of fashions. In this idiom, women's status and reproductive role was underlined by the belt and hangings, and in some areas that was the most visible feature of local dress,⁵⁹⁹ while the same focus was evidenced for the men who had weapon burials and sizeable baldrics in other regions, as we saw previously. In the texts, the usage of the belts was focused on the men and expressed their activities, war, administration, ecclesiastical office, and much less on women in general and on their roles; this accords with the North Frankish mortuary vestimentary practices, but it obscures all the rest of the very variable evidence.

How can the belts and girdles encountered in the textual record and the archaeology give us more information on the ways a textile was worn, in a variety of forms that could embrace all walks of life, occupations and social roles? In the texts, three ways of wearing a baldric were evidenced, while no information was given as to the cut of a man's tunic. In the texts, also, we learned that girdles could be worn by men and women with all varieties of dress imaginable. The dress, however, was not described. Given the preponderance of the male gender in the sources, and the abstract way dress was usually treated, it is easily understood that most information about the combinations of garments, layering, taste, accentuation of the axis or not by a belt, accessories, the revealing or concealment of parts of the body, could result from the analysis and contextualisation of the archaeological facts. From a functional point of view, the metallic parts of belts, placed on openings or seams or folds as we have seen, and the hangings, preserved more oxydised textiles, layers and constructional details than brooches, and more information on how a textile was cut and sewn to fit a human figure. On this basis, I attempted here to reconstruct three types of different cuts of dress for women. The various forms of a belt were used here also as a guide to social roles and occupations, because they were evidenced so often and in such a variety, artefactual and

⁵⁹⁹ Like Anglo-Saxon England, the Frankish Centre, the South, for both centuries of the furnished burials. In the Rhineland and the North (Normandy, Neustria and Austrasia) for parts of the 6th century only.

linguistic, that they could fit together, as we showed previously, and seemed to incorporate more personal, social and vestimentary values than the tunic or coat that it constricted.

What was the stylistic criterion of the vestimentary systems and the belts of the people who formed the majority? Was it the shape and the cut of the garment, the accentuation of the axis, the colour, the embroidery and the weave pattern? It is very probable from what we have seen so far that, alongside the great importance of the buckle plates and of the objects hung around one's person, as found in a burial and as is also stressed so much in the written sources, in reality other factors were equally relevant. The shape and cut of the main dress and, as we have seen in the extant garments of the 8th and early 10th centuries, even the shape, cut and decoration of the underdress could have been an important marker of style if visible under the main dress. The axis remained the same in these even if the belt was not found – the loopholes attested to its use, even if it is absent from the written sources and the depictions of this period. Shape and cut were probably a very important factor of regional dress for women. These were most probably vehicles of culture, traditions, as they transmitted weaving and sewing traditions and innovations, as we have seen, especially in the contexts where their dress was more showy than that of men. Colour, embroidery and weave pattern needed to be discussed in the extant Appendix III in the vol. II of this Thesis, in details because these features, even if they were used more often than our evidence points to – the evidence we have is scanty – cannot be included in this discussion, which concerns visibility from a distance. Decoration like this would be virtually invisible except at close quarters.

To conclude: belts, and their functional and stylistic variety and prominence, have been used here to bring out the dynamics of the interaction between the different types of empirical material, textual and archaeological. I hope that this interaction of information has facilitated, rather than blocked, this interpretative attempt at the usage and the meaning of early medieval dress.

A theory of visual hierarchy in dress was used as the background against which the structural element that remained the most consistent, through all types of empirical evidence, was examined in the texts and the material record. The most common and prominent clothing element, with the most forms of linguistic representation in the texts

of all types, proved to be the belt. The sets of words pertaining to belts in the paradigms of early medieval authors, the new meanings and uses in the changing vestimentary systems throughout the time span of this study, argue that this prominence was not only visual, but was used to mark out social categories and the distinctions between them. The visibility and prominence of what is worn in real life, however, was not enough or appropriate for us to examine the evidence from burial archaeology, and it was necessary to discuss the significance of the shape of the garments in addition to their structural axis, as these were equally important in the very well-crafted extant garments from the 8th and the 9th century which survive. Their prominence was examined comparatively and contextualised, as also was the focus of display on a body and its meaning. These criteria were used to bridge the gap between the application of visibility and stylistic messaging theory from the field of anthropology among the living and the interpretation of dress on bodies from the early middle ages. It is wrong to apply Wobst's theory as it is, in the history and archaeology of this period: the focus on belts is so great, for men, in the literary sources mostly and also for women, who are very artefactually visible in the archaeology. Early medieval dress can be multifocal at times, for women, or else the emphasis can be put on weapons and tools of men and on the male body, in other times and places. The waist area nevertheless remains always a semantic constant in this period. Meeting different kinds of people wearing different kinds of belts in the street could have told us most about their appearance, and communicated their provenance and culture, their taste, their life-cycle position, their social situation. The signifier of the visibility of the shape of dress, and its main axis girdled with objects related to the person's activities, could also warn us, in a period when so many people had to rely on their weapons as their means of survival and guarantee of security. In this period, of direct communication systems and great mobility of population, it was very important to recognise potential support in time and to tell friend from foe as soon as possible.

Early medieval clothes systems and their structural axis could be very carefully crafted, made with detail and care and worn in a great variety of ways according to personal taste and choice, as shown in the undertunics of elite Frankish and Welsh women, probably girded to exhibit the embroidery onto a woolen composite weave gown with full skirts, gussets and gores, the way the Wakerley woman had also done more than

two centuries before in a small rural settlement. The clothing systems of the early middle ages transmitted interactive messages of great complexity of meaning, some of which will escape us for ever. But I hope I have managed to show here that the main key to these codes was the axis of the waistline and the belt.

CONCLUSION

Usage and Meaning of Early Medieval Textiles. A structural analysis of vestimentary systems in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England.

The earliest unequivocal evidence for the use of treadles on a loom in Europe or the Mediterranean is a passage in Rashi de Troyes (Rabbi Solomon Izhaqi), dated to the later 11th century, where he mentions that men weave with their feet, while women have a cane which moves up and down.⁶⁰⁰ This passage marks the end of an era: it is the last time that the two-beamed vertical loom, its products, its techniques and the women who operated it for the most part, makes its appearance in the sources. Textiles, the fragments of which were discussed in Chapter 3, were produced on this much slower and simpler device, meant for domestic production, and were woven by means of a very painstaking and probably intimate and personalised process, most of the time on a small scale. The level of the technique could be very high, nevertheless: the pattern of the weave could range from very simple to very composite, as we saw.⁶⁰¹ This was for most people in the early middle ages the material basis of the vestimentary systems discussed in this thesis, and I use this example of the end of the use of the two-beamed loom because I want to underline the special cultural, economic and personal value and, subsequently, the

⁶⁰⁰ Rashi de Troyes, *Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Shabbat 105, quoted in White L., *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, (Oxford, 1962), pp. 117-118 and also in Bender-Jørgensen, p. 150.

⁶⁰¹ See for the great range of the weaves attested in the analysis of archaeological textiles, in Appendix III, Textile Terms and Procedures.

meaning invested in the clothes produced in this way throughout the early middle ages in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England.

This thesis has discussed early medieval dress in different localities in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England with the aim of finding the links between the meaning of early medieval vestimentary systems, comprising textiles and other dress accessories, and the practices revealed in the textual and artefactual record. The problem of finding out the ways clothes were worn and how this was interpreted within a social milieu or across different regional, social and cultural contexts was addressed here through criteria that contextualised the information from the sources, and also through semiotic paradigms. These were plotted out on the basis of the key points of structural signification, which was visual, functional and semantic: the most recurrent element proved to be the belt, and the axis of the waist-line, in both written and archaeological sources. These elements became the main referents used here to stimulate different readings of the archaeological and also the historical data of early medieval dress: the multifunctional use of accessories, the layering, the details of the cut and of the shape and generally of garment construction, the role of decorative details, weaves, of dyes, embroidery and stitching, the objects suspended from the belt, and the usage of these element in various types of written sources, were put under close examination in some parts of Chapter 2 (see sections 2.5, 2.6) and in most of Chapter 3 (see sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.8, 3.9) The conclusions in Chapters 2 and 3 attest to the fact that the device of organisation of the empirical material in Syntagms and Systems in this study was not superficial but facilitated the deconstruction down to the simplest but meaningful units of a system and the reconstruction of whole vestimentary systems. This device helped me address main issues relevant to the deep structures of realities in the early medieval past. In the course of this examination, the main issues that were discussed were in reference to:

First, the establishment of a common semiotic plane of interaction and comparison between the historical sources and the archaeology. Even though the relationship between the written and the artefactual record has at times been far from ideal, the case studies have revealed a number of opportunities for comparative analysis, as in the discussions of headveils and headbands, and baldrics and official belts of state, particularly visible and prominent artefacts associated with women and the men of the

élites. The same social categories idealised in a text were also recovered from a cemetery, and became real to the extent that the information on the technical details of headbands or veils came alive. Their usage for the expression of their various social identities resonated in both types of empirical evidence. The criteria for the levels of the correspondence between text and non verbal systems, set out in the sections that dealt with method in Chapters 1, 2, 3 (sections 1.2, 1.3, 1.8, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7) were based on the notion of the existence of a recursive relationship between structures and practice. These criteria outlined and challenged here in the above methodological sections include the contrast between the diachronic and the synchronic views and the quality of information relevant to these views we get from the archaeology and the sources, the problem of disparity and different rates of fragmentation in these two types of sources. This was seen especially from the point of view of the time occurrence of the evidence which can be biased, the quality of information e.g. the technical features that are in the most part absent from the historical sources, the biases in favour of the privileged literate authors and the world views they represented. I think that the great void in the information concerning localities, deviance, the habitual and prosaic, the female gender, and the contrast with what we get from the archaeology was used creatively in the conclusion of Chapters 2 and especially 3. Last but not least, the different rate by which we can detect and evaluate change, which can be gradual in one type of the empirical sources, and probably so rapid as to be very confusing in the other, had to be taken into consideration. I think that the discussions in the conclusive sections of Chapters 2 and 3 pinpoint the solution used here to bridge and evaluate the above disparities: the parallel examination of general social categories and social roles existent in both types of sources, such as gender, status, locality, age, profession, liminality, the vertical and horizontal social distinctions found as the primary structuring elements of historical societies. Moreover, the criteria used here to disengage the evidence from the above obstructions and to bring together the two types of unequally biased source material alerted me to some quite interesting observations concerning the usage of dress systems (as we have seen in pp.135-139 and 307-316).

The analysis and interpretation of the above evidence is relevant to the second issue revisited here: this interdisciplinary task was based on a search for a method to

approach meaning in objects -and the pretext here was textile objects - in early medieval societies, meaning in the relations between people and their creations. I tried here, to the measure that this became possible, not to impose verbal meanings, extracted from the historical sources onto the interpretations of non verbal sign systems, that is the material correlates and the interactive interpretations of artefacts between social groups, that is the meta-language of the objects. There was not space here however, for a discussion of the relations of production, between people and their creations, and the technology and economics of weaving that would illuminate a lot of problems of construction, exchange of artefacts between localities, and perhaps more meaningful relationships (as some frankish buckle sets and the Alamannic composite weave types that were evidenced in a number of localities). I hope I will be able to discuss these features, relevant to production and explore the relationship between artisan and object and artisan and consumer elsewhere in the near future.

However, the theory of meaning deployed here in the context of the total social phenomena discussed in the introduction (the analytical categories of systems and structural elements, the corporeal semantics and the contextual analysis of textile and metalwork artefacts in association to certain social roles), functioned more as an interpretative tool in the area of signification of dress and relevant objects for social agents in specific local ethnic, status and gender contexts in early medieval societies. As a result a number of new interpretations and variable significations and new information was extracted about the varieties of headwear, the temporal and geographical foci of new typologies of these and also of the belts, the main types of the shape and style of female and to a point male dress were localised, contextualised and described in detail. Moreover, these were set against the linguistic background of the textual evidence of types of dress accessories on a time-line. The slow rate of the dissemination of the word systems associated to veils and belts in different genres was used here to accentuate crucial differences between the two types of sources and to show that verbal systems are not arbitrary but liable to a different rate of historical change than the non-verbal systems. All in all I think we were brought closer to a vivid and up to a point valid investigation of the signifiants of vestimentary systems and artefactual expression for this part of the past. It can be argued that the methods and the interdisciplinary approach

employed here can also be used as suggestions for further research directions in the hermeneutics of artefacts found in the texts and the material record.

Another issue related to these areas of signification I tried to explore within the premises of a theory of meaning, was very closely linked to the construction of local and geographical contexts and also linked to local and ethnic identities: as it was outlined at the beginning of this study, (see pp. 35-36 and 41-44) one of the great challenges in comparative studies such as this one is to bring together evidence from Francia and Anglo-Saxon England and examine it on a common interpretative platform. The problems inherent in the nature of the evidence, the different chronological systems, the different archaeological traditions, the different methodologies in textile analysis were only the beginning. In the course of this examination, it was revealed that there was a great disparity between the availability of the archaeological material, and the texts, having no early latin texts from insular contexts and having instead a profusion of textile and metalwork artefacts in very good preservation state in comparison to the evidence from Francia (see section 3. 6). In the conclusive section of Chapter 3, however, the quality of the evidence was reassessed on the basis of the real signification of the quantitative and temporal disparity between texts in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England: in reality, some of the things we got to know from the texts in Francia was not so insightful as to most social categories and practices, it was very biased in favour of the élites and the clergy and we still had to fall back to the material record. And this was evidenced as much as in the case of Anglo-Saxon England for the 5th-7th centuries so in both foci of research we still run into the same kind of trouble as to fill in the voids of information and understand better all the material evidence that was obscured and hidden or discarded from the sources. As a matter of fact, we gained insight into the different and so similar ways Franks- all kinds of them - and Anglo-Saxons – in the diverse ways they understood themselves- used the same artefacts, invested different meanings in them, and construed their social realities and personal identities by the way they surrounded their gendered bodies in cloth and metalwork. The use of the semiotic paradigms and the comparison between these large geographical entities show how constructive and interesting comparative analysis can be.

Another of these areas of signification is related to the another central issue of this thesis: the way that we should attempt to reconstruct clothing ensembles, and I have tried to do this in a number of case studies from the written and the artefactual record, as in the cases of the man's clothes from the Ravenna document of 564, the "Arnegundis" burial, the lady of Cologne and the Chelles relics. In all these, the basic axis of the organisation of the empirical material was found to be the same; and in these cases and others the same contextual and semiotic criteria were also used for both the written and the material record, so that change in dress, recurrent different cuts and shapes, and constructional details could be investigated throughout the time span and spatial and cultural range of the thesis.

Another main issue addressed here was the way that we should convey the necessary information about a vestimentary system when a drawing or a visual reconstruction is attempted. I hope that I have shown here that the additions of a structural axis of dress, the highlighting of the most important points in a system, the layering, the close relationship of the drawing to the visual documentation of an assemblage. This would add the missing third dimension to the reconstruction, and could help an audience assess this and the conditions of use of the textile artefacts and dress and help the viewer place it within a specific historical perspective. In an extension to this point, the use of an anthropological theory of visual stylistic messaging was discussed and examined, new elements were added in, in an attempt to develop the tools necessary for us to extract the most visually significant elements from early medieval vestimentary systems. So, the shape of dress, the axis and most important structural elements, and the interactive notion of the possible different meanings invested in elements of dress between different social groups were added (see pp. 157-167 and 307-317).

In the course of this examination, other factors of semantic importance came up, which related the usage and the meaning of textiles to the significance of the concepts early medieval people had for their bodies, and to their gendered artefactual representation, via an analysis of corporeal, verbal and non-verbal signs found in the relationship between the body and the apparel. The analysis and the interpretation of dress items from burial assemblages of this kind was used to enlighten how, dress was

worn , why in this or the other way, and by whom. What I have attempted here, as an aside, is to propose a new system of artefact evaluation and interpretation on the basis of three semiotic criteria, and the criterial of contextual reconstruction of vestimentary systems and to use it to organise the data from burial assemblages that contained dress accessories and textile fragments.⁶⁰² The criteria have to do with the artefact within the assemblage and in relation with this and other contexts so researchers can evaluate the finds in association to a site or a locality in a system that can be inscribed within the “occurrence seriation” methods. In the case of an examination of the find within the assemblage the criteria are: 1. the usual dimensions of the artefact in the vicinity and similar contexts, 2. its associations with other objects, position on a body or near it, and its orientation 3. the inherent morphological and functional properties of the artefact, especially if it is composite. In the case of a comparative analysis of all finds in a site or more sites, the criteria would be : 1. the comparative artefactual prominence in relevance to gender 2. the main focus of display, 3. the interactive interpretations of the axis of dress in relation to other burials in the vicinity. This method was put to use here on very diverse empirical materials, in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England and tested against the history of the usage of words as well as on a time-line; I regret there is no space here or the Appendices for a development and the graphic exemplification of this method of evaluation of artefacts found in burial archaeology, but I hope I will be able to expand and test it in a study of evaluation methods of early medieval finds from burial assemblages which is a crucial source of information for the period under scope in the near future.

At this point I can only hope that the interpretation of the cultural, gender, regional, social issues that came up in the present study as a result are not very far from early medieval realities.

In this study, early medieval textile artefacts, such as belts and headwear and their linguistic representations, became the axis of a semiotic system through which social structures and events were filtered across a very broad time span and over a multiplicity of cultural and geographical settings. The language of dress expressed by the

⁶⁰² See for the introduction of these criteria and the way these were applied on the empirical material from the different regions in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England, see section 3.7 at pp. 241- 244.

genres of the written record - and their biases - and the diverse artefactual idioms found in the archaeology were brought together here, and a number of new trajectories presented above, can therefore be explored. Early medieval vestimentary expression was indeed found to transcend the spatial, temporal and cultural boundaries set by contemporary norms as revealed in some of the written sources, and it revealed a complicated picture which could be the result of very complex subjectivities, as expressed in the multidimensional usages of, for example, headwear and belts and girdles, and their interrelationship to cloth itself.

Nevertheless, setting aside these cases of intersemiotic corroboration between the historical and the archaeological sources, I think that we gain even more information and more in-depth perspectives - on the meaning and practice of vestimentary systems, of language and of things, on social categories and on the uses of material production, on historical structure and historical event - when these two types of sources are found in heterosemiotic conflict. It is in these cases that I mostly ventured to compare facts and tried to interpret them; and then tried to find if and how the new (and contradictory) evidence fitted and functioned within a dress system or not. For in the obscured facts, in the gaps in the information, there was room for the signs of historical change, personal agency, the specific and the occasional, collective decisions, and the demographics of the anthropology of textiles, throughout the early middle ages.

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